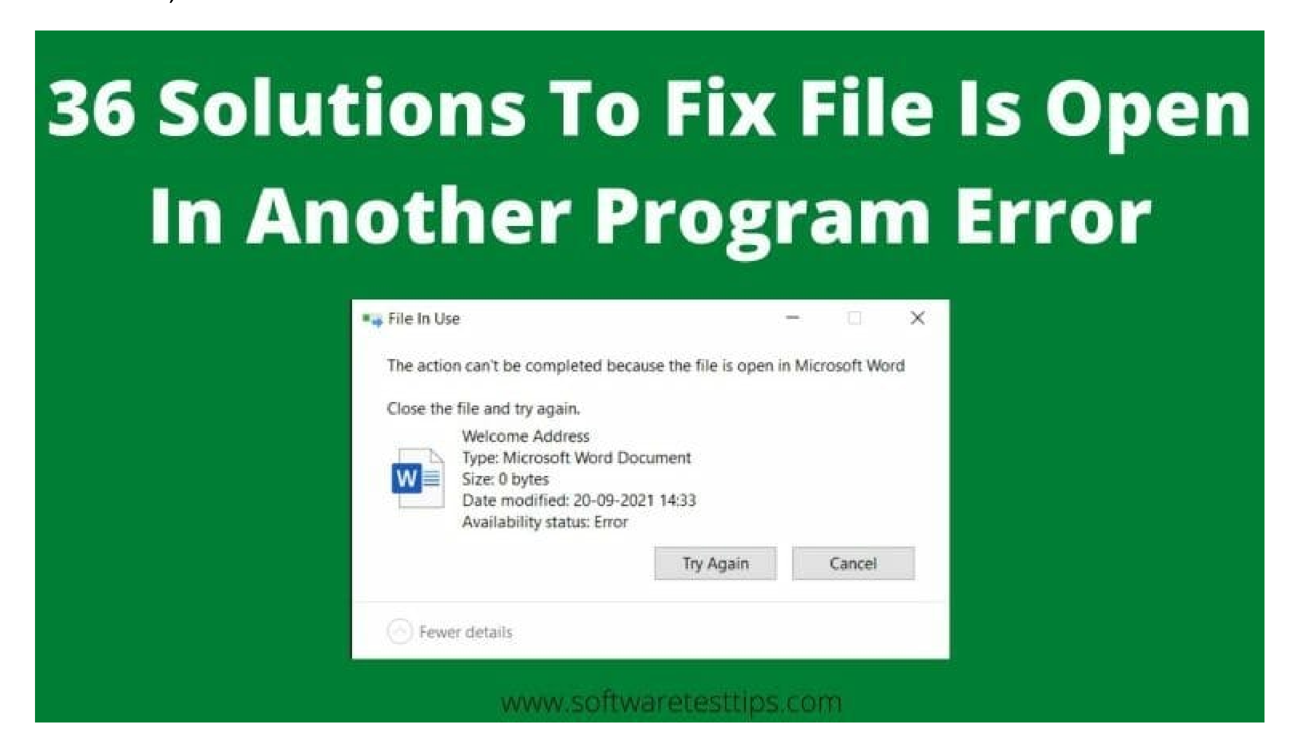
36 Solutions To Fix File Is Open In Another Program Error

October 30, 2021



Have you ever tried to copy and paste a file or rename it and instead of getting this done, you see an error message that says "Action can't be completed because the file is open in another program". This error message can be very annoying when you try to move the file to another location or change its name to another name.

This is everyone's first instinct when they see this issue. Most of us keep trying to carry out the action, again and again, hoping that will fix the issue. This can get even more annoying when you cannot find any programs running like the File Explorer proclaims to.

It just doesn't make any sense to any of us, when we see this message and try to keep doing what we want to do and get things done.

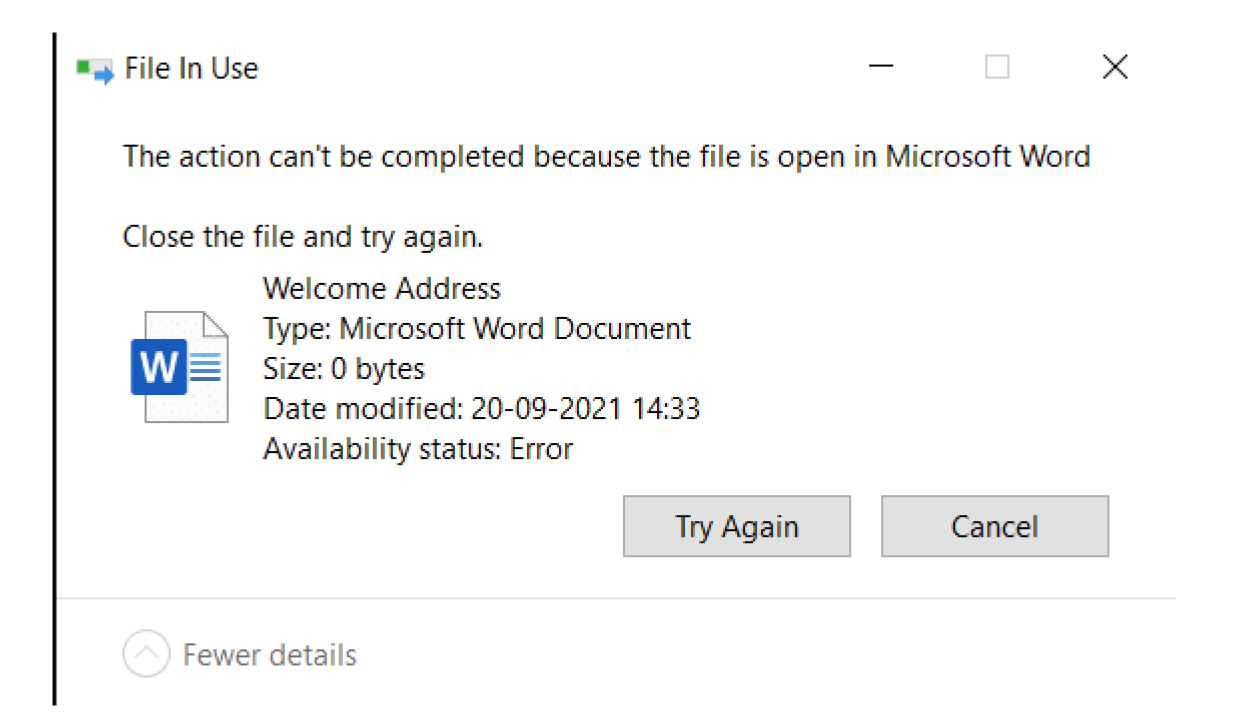
This might seem like a very simple issue but it isn't. Retrying the action is not going to help you get rid of this error message but the solutions we are giving you in this article will definitely come to your aid when you inevitably face this issue on your Windows 10 PC.

There are over thirty solutions that can be used to fix these computer errors. We recommend implementing all of them, one by one until the right fix is applied.

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Why Is My File Open In Another Program, Even When I Didn't Run It?

Let's try to understand the error message first so that it is easier to fix the issue and actually, know what we are doing.



Windows users are most likely to see this error when they try to work with a file, folder, or its contents. This error happens when these files are being used by some other application or service and they do not let you access the files until these applications finish using the mentioned file.

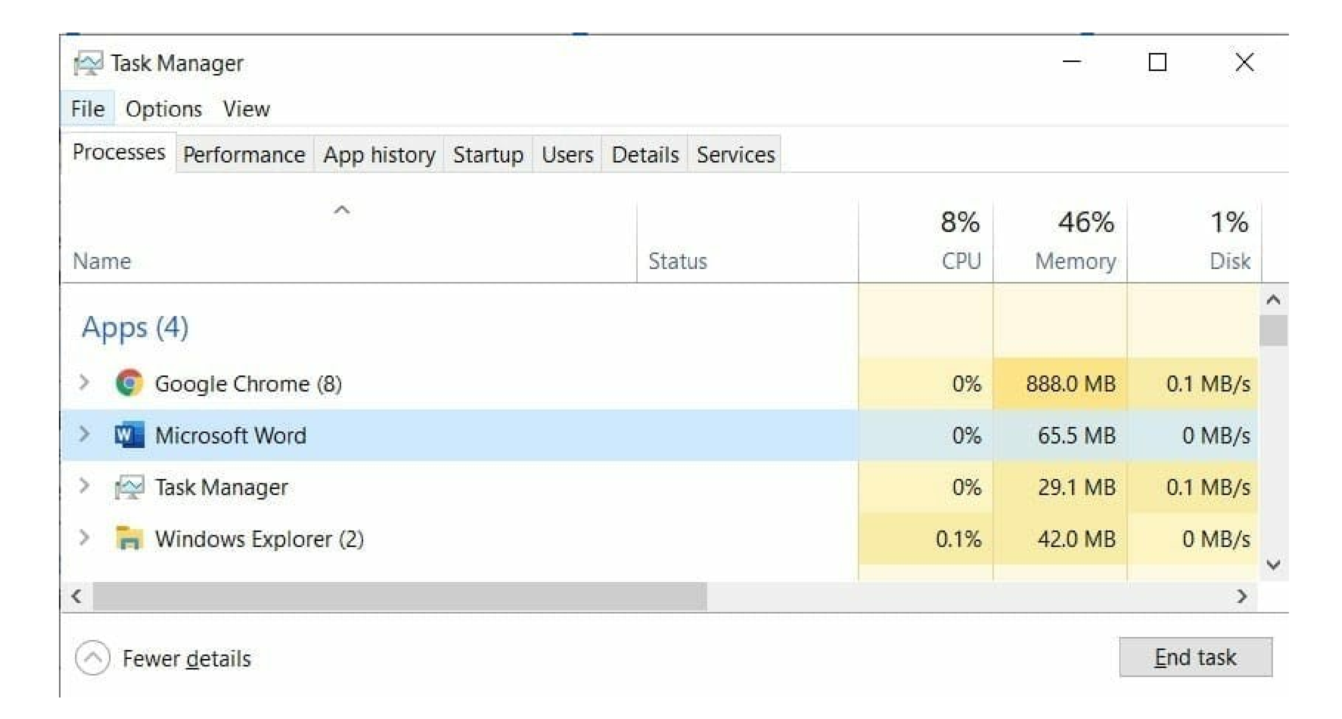
For example, let's assume the existence of a Microsoft Word file that is open on your computer. When you try to delete it, even when the Word window is open, you will not be able to do so. You will have to exit the window or kill the process abruptly so that you can continue with the file's deletion process.

This might seem obnoxious to most users but it is, in fact, a very useful Windows policy that has been around for quite some time. This feature was added to the Windows Operating System (OS) to prevent the data consistency issue.

If you do not know what data inconsistency is, it is a state of your computer where a database system has a lot of input methods, even if it deals with the same or similar data.

This will result in the creation of duplicate data or additional and unwanted temporary files, which can take up quite some storage on your computer's storage and might even occupy a considerable percentage of the RAM.

If this issue occurs on a large scale, you might even end up with randomly generated, meaningless data that cannot give you reliable outputs.



Coming back to the File is open in another program error, you can check the task manager to see if the file, that cannot be accessed was being used by any other service. If it is not, you could be looking at a serious and constant error.

This means that a hidden application has been using the file or the file is "running" because of a bug in the Windows OS. There are several other reasons for this error message. We'll go through those as we look into the steps to get rid of this file explorer issue.

Local Networks And The "Action Can't Be Completed" Error

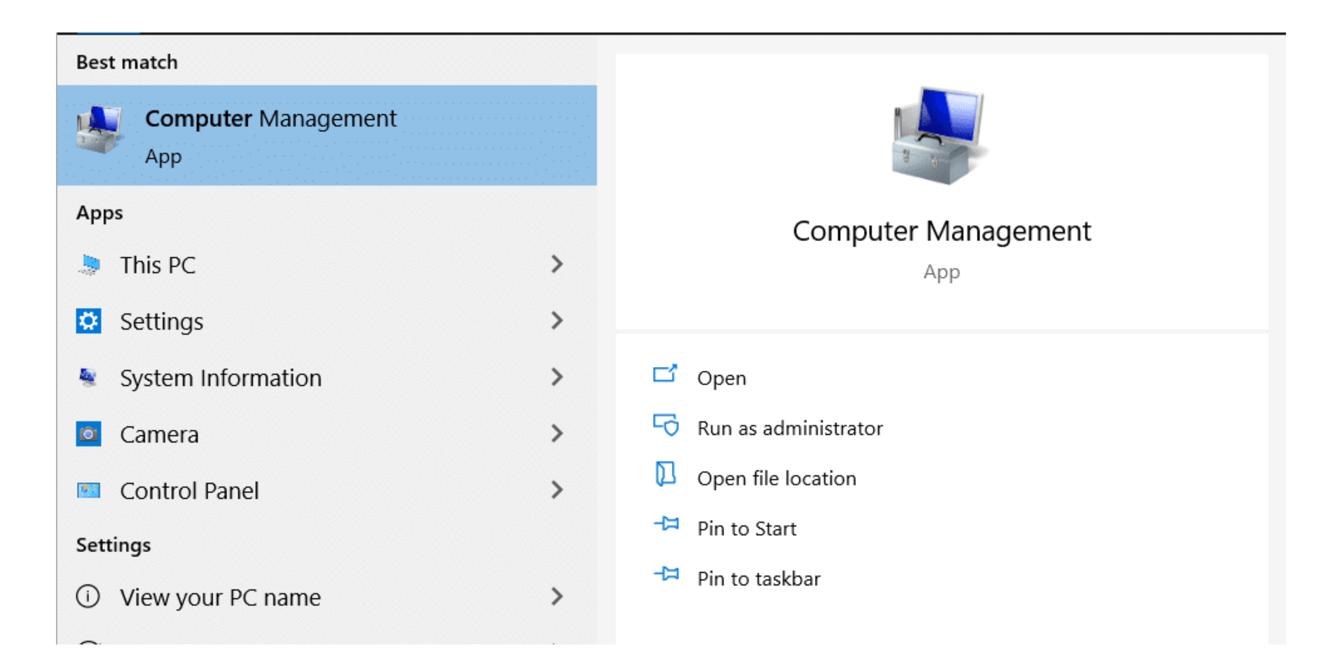
Another thing you need to know about the Action can't be completed error is that it can occur when two or more computers are intra-connected over a Local Area Network (LAN) or through a server. When your systems are connected, the Windows Explorer process sees all the computers put together as one.

This increases the chances of this error showing up, as all the applications and services running on all the connected computers will be taken into consideration.

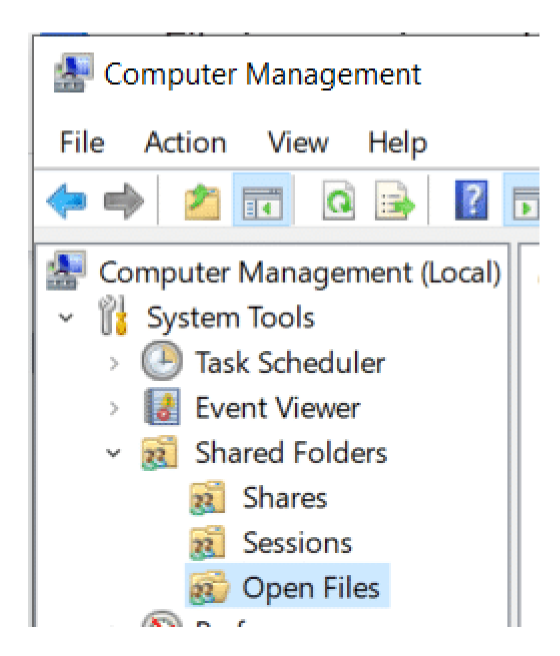
If you are in an office where all the computers are connected together over a single network, it will be very difficult for you to check every computer for the running application and can take a long time to locate it.

If you wish to find out more about this error and where the source of this issue is on, among all the issues on the intra-linked computer, use the following steps.

1. Open the Start menu and type in **Computer management**.

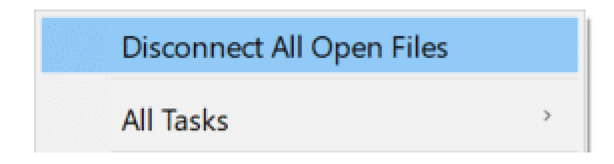


2. From the search results, click on the top-most search result.
3. When the Computer Management window opens, expand the **System tools > Shared folder** and choose the **Open Files** option.



You will be able to see all the files that are shared over the local network.

4. Right-click on an empty area and choose the **Disconnect All Open Files** option.



After you are done with these steps, try copy-pasting, deleting, or renaming the file. You should be able to get through with it, now that the obstacles have been removed.

Solutions For “ Action Cannot Be Completed Because The File Is Open In Another Program” Error Message On Your Windows 10 PC

There are well over thirty resolves for the Action can’t be completed error on your computer. We recommend starting them off with simple workarounds like closing the process & retrying it after a while and doing the action after rebooting the computer.

You do not need the following procedures and the instructions to carry them out if the first two options work for you. These workarounds will delete all the cached files and unwanted configurations. If they do not work, it means that you are facing a very complicated issue on your computer.

But this doesn’t mean that it cannot be solved by yourself and has to be taken to a professional to get it done.

Before we start working on getting through with the action being completed for the file/folder, scan the target object with antivirus software. The Antivirus software should be able to detect if the issue was with the file and not the Windows Explorer. If it was, there is no need for using the below steps.

Use the below techniques to solve this problem on your computer and proceed with your interactions with the file/folder.

1. **Clean Your Disk Up And Remove The Thumbnails**
2. **Clear The Contents Of Your Recycle Bin**
3. **Delete The Temporary Files On Your Computer**
4. **Change The File Name To A Different One**
5. **Deactivate The Preview Pane**
6. **Disable The Folder Thumbnails Through The File Explorer Options**
7. **Deactivate The Thumbnails Feature Via The Performance Options**
8. **Delete The Folder Thumbnails Through The Registry Editor**
9. **Kill And Restart Windows Explorer Process**
10. **Launch Folder Windows As A Separate Process**
11. **Kill The Process With The Process Explorer**
12. **Switch To A Different Folder View Mode**
13. **Turn Off The Windows Search Feature**
14. **Close The Windows Explorer Window And Open It Again**
15. **Boot Up The PC In Safe Mode**
16. **Do A Clean Boot Up Of Your PC**
17. **Switch From The Adobe PDF Reader To A Different One**
18. **Optimize The File/Folder Properties**
19. **Delete The Thumbs.db File With The Help Of The Command Prompt Tool**
20. **Remove The Troublesome File Through The Command Prompt Utility**
21. **Update Your Computer’s .NET Framework**
22. **Download Updates For The Windows OS**
23. **Reconfigure The System Security Settings**
24. **Change The Security Settings Configuration For The Dllhost.Exe Process**
25. **End The COM Surrogate Process**
26. **End The Process In The Task Manager**
27. **Turn The Homegroup Feature Off**
28. **Disable The Sharing Feature For The File**
29. **Unmount And Eject The Virtual CD/DVD Drives (Magic ISO)**
30. **Remove All Inherited Permissions For The File/Folder**
31. **Make Changes In The Computer’s Group Policy Through The Local Group Policy Editor**
32. **Boot Up To Ubuntu And Delete The File**
33. **Get Rid Of System Files’ Metadata With Third-party Applications**
34. **Transfer The Ownership To Another User**
35. **Copy A Different File**

36. **Disable The Read-only Attribute**

Fixing "Action Cannot Be Completed Because The File Is Open In Another Program" Error On Windows 10 Computers

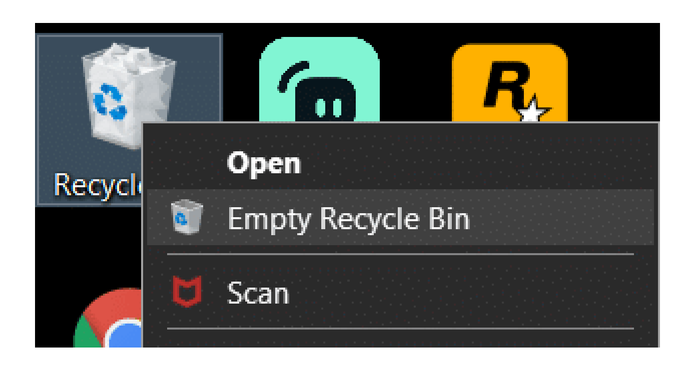
Go ahead and start putting these methods to use only after you try the retry and restart workarounds for this issue. Now, the list is quite long and it can take a lot of time to get this issue straightened out. Your patience will help you fix the "Action cannot be completed" issue on your Windows 10 computer, as fast as possible.

Solution 1: Clear The Contents Of Your Recycle Bin

Though it might sound weird, it has been reported that clearing the computer's recycle bin can help fix the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error on a Windows 10 computer.

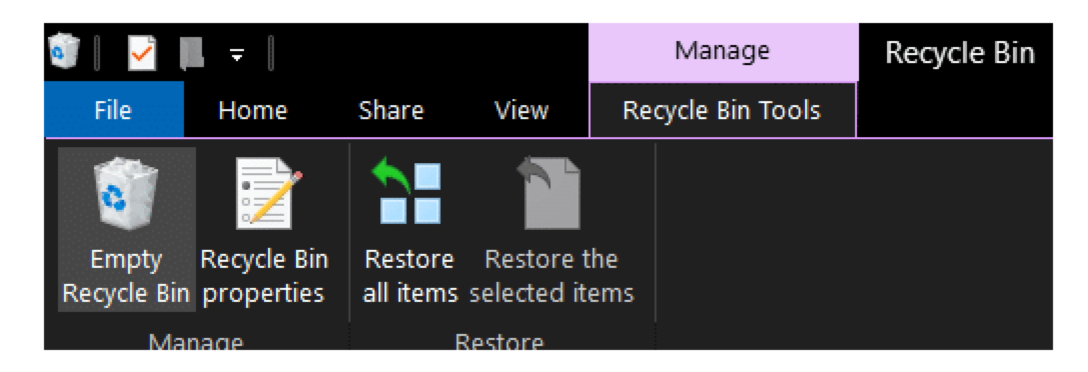
There are two methods to empty your recycle bin of unnecessary files.

1. Right-click on the **Recycle bin icon** on the PC desktop and select **Empty recycle bin** from the context menu.



You will be shown a confirmation window where you have to select **Yes** to delete the files in the recycle bin permanently.

2. Open the **Recycle bin** window, go to the **Recycle Bin tools** tab, and click on the **Empty Recycle bin** button.



If you wish to delete any file permanently, without having to send it to the recycle bin first and deleting it from there, you can press and hold the Shift key while you press the Delete key or choose the delete option from the File pop-up menu.

You might wonder how clearing the recycle bin can help fix this file explorer issue. But unfortunately, we do not have an answer. It has been known to work for several Windows users but the issue has shown up when files were sent to the Recycle bin once again. To avoid it, you will have to permanently delete your files all the time, which isn't much to ask for. Or you can clear the bin out regularly.

Solution 2: Delete The Temporary Files On Your Computer

Temporary (TEMP) files can cause a wide variety of problems, like taking up large chunks of space on your hard drive and causing the ‘action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program’ error on Windows PCs.

[See also 7 Common Avast VPN Problems With Solutions]

These files are created by applications or system services when permanent files are being created, while the applications are running to create them. When they start accumulating in a location, the chances of them staying there until they are noticed and deleted. These files will be responsible for a lot of issues, if not addressed.

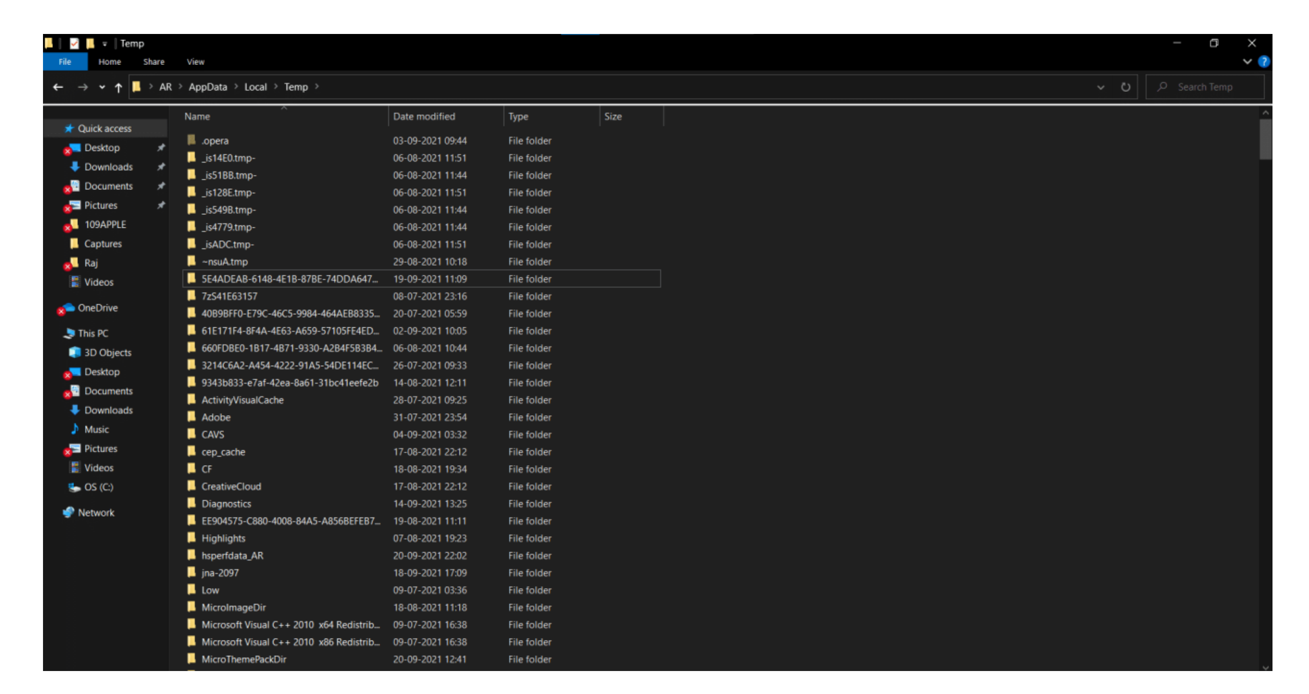
This is the right way to delete the temporary files from their directory:

1. Launch your Run tool (press Windows key + R) and input this command line:

%temp%

2. Execute this command with the help of the **Enter** key or the **OK** button. This will launch the Temp folder in this directory:

C:\ Users\ ”Username”\ AppData\ Local\ Temp



You can also open File Explorer window (press Windows key + E) and go to this directory.

3. Now, delete all the files in this folder.

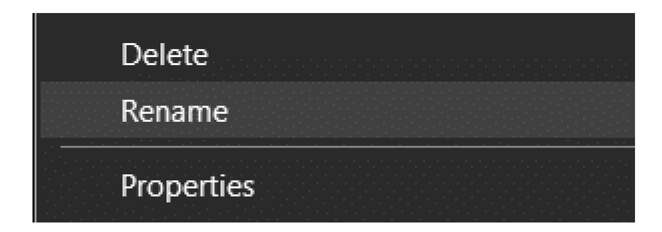
Restart the computer after this step. This will keep the changes that you made recently.

Solution 3: Change The File Name To A Different One

Renaming the file is a simple solution to this issue. You will just have to

1. Open file explorer and locate the directory.

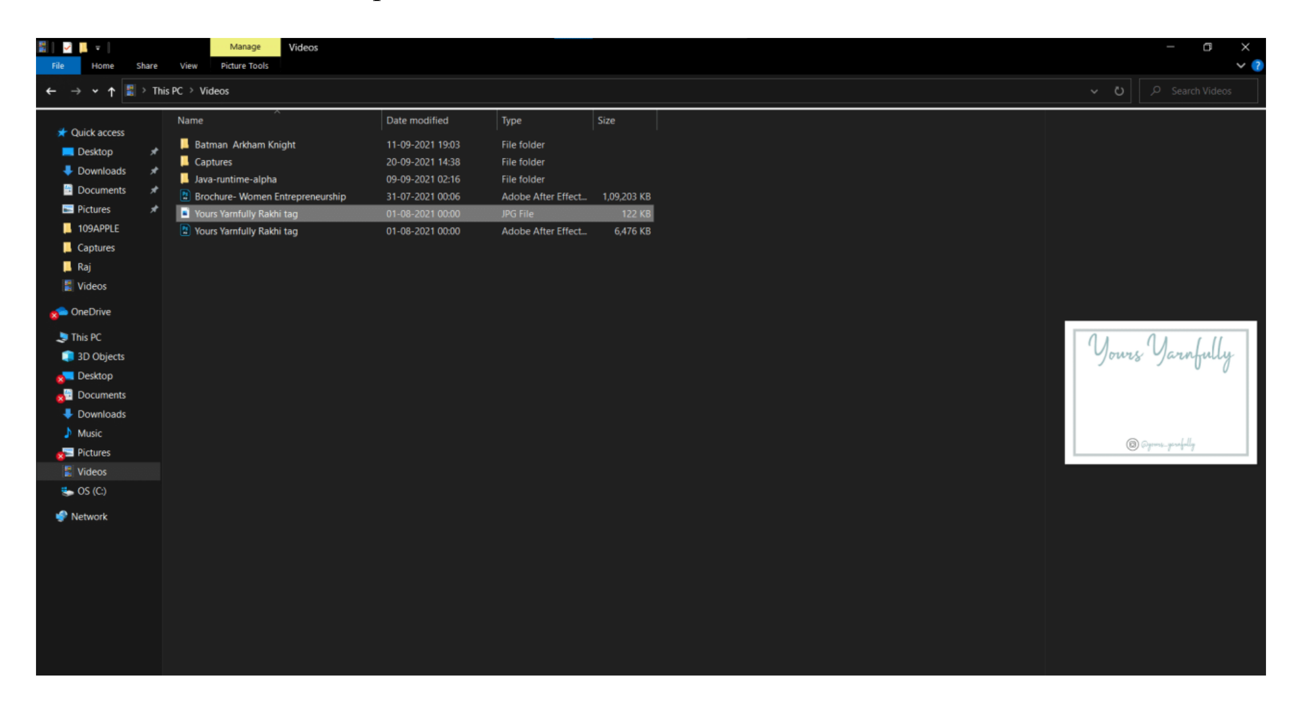
2. Right-click on it and select the **Rename** option.



3. Now, type in an appropriate name for the file and click on an empty space.

Solution 4: Deactivate The Preview Pane

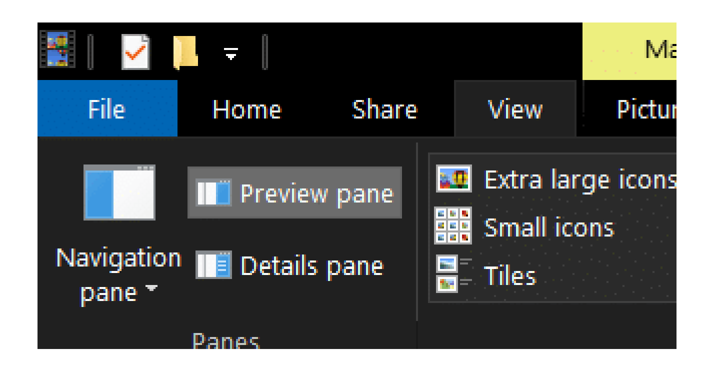
Most of us may not have noticed the Preview pane, which is a small option that is located in the View menu on the File Explorer window.



When the Preview pane is enabled, you will be able to see little previews of the files, images, or other documents for reference, when they are selected. This is a helpful, little tool but it can cause the File Explorer to use more CPU memory and in some ways, cause the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error on your computer when it is enabled.

Disable Preview Pane feature and check if the issue still exists.

1. Open a **File Explorer** window. For this, you can use the Windows key + E keys shortcut or just click on the folder icon on the taskbar.
2. Click on the **View** menu, which is located on the Menu bar, right under the Title bar.
3. In the Panes section, you will be able to see the Preview Pane in it.



If it is selected, click on it to disable the Preview pane feature.

Now, you will no longer be able to see the preview on your file on the right side of the File Explorer window. But on the brighter side, you will have more free space on your CPU and no longer have the ‘action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program’ error.

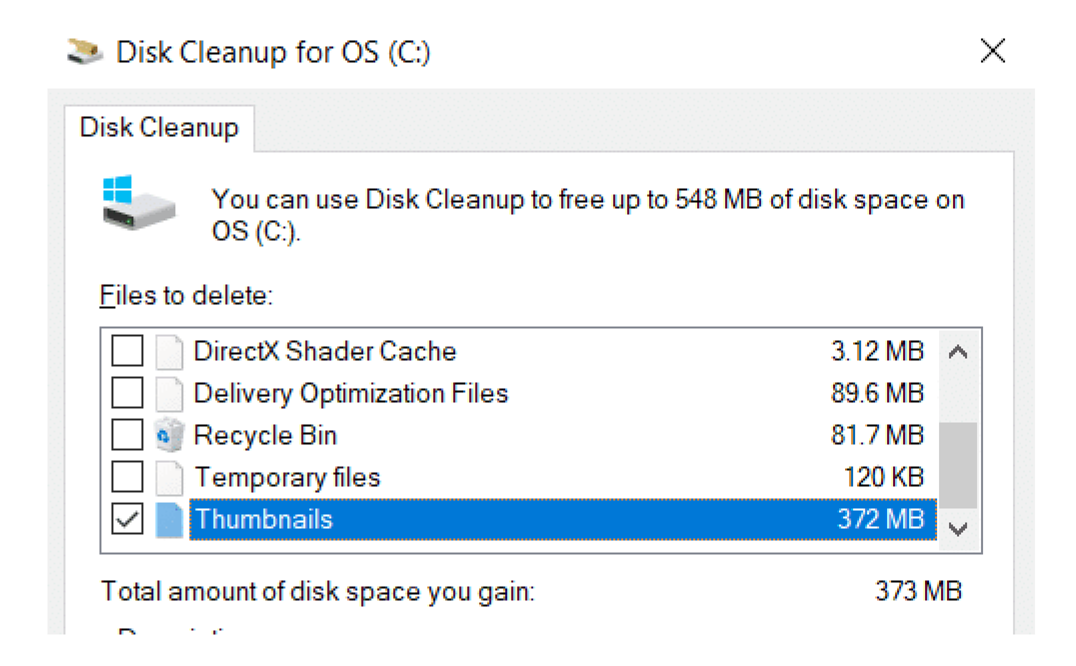
Solution 5: Clean Your Disk Up And Disable Thumbnails

The Disk Cleanup utility is a computer maintenance tool that is built into the Windows OS and is used to remove unnecessary files and rarely-used applications in order to create more free space on the computer’s storage drive. When this tool is run, it looks for applications and files that weren’t used by the computer in a long time and gets rid of them with the consent of the computer user.

This problem can be caused by the thumbnails of files in your Windows Explorer. The only solution to this is to remove the thumbnails, which should get rid of the ‘action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program’ issue on Windows 10.

Here’s how you can use the Disk Cleanup tool to delete the thumbnails:

1. Search for the **Disk Cleanup** tool in the Start bar and open it, by clicking on the menu.
2. From the drop-down menu, choose the system drive and choose the one you want to remove. The default drive in this menu is the **C**: drive. You will not be able to see this window if no partitions have been made on your storage drive.
3. Click on the **Ok** button to start scanning the drive. The scan time depends on how large the drive’s partition is.
4. When the scan ends, the Disk Cleanup for System (“Drive letter”:) will appear on your screen. Locate the **Thumbnails checkbox** and select it.



5. Finally, click on the **Ok** button to remove these files. This process can take quite some time.

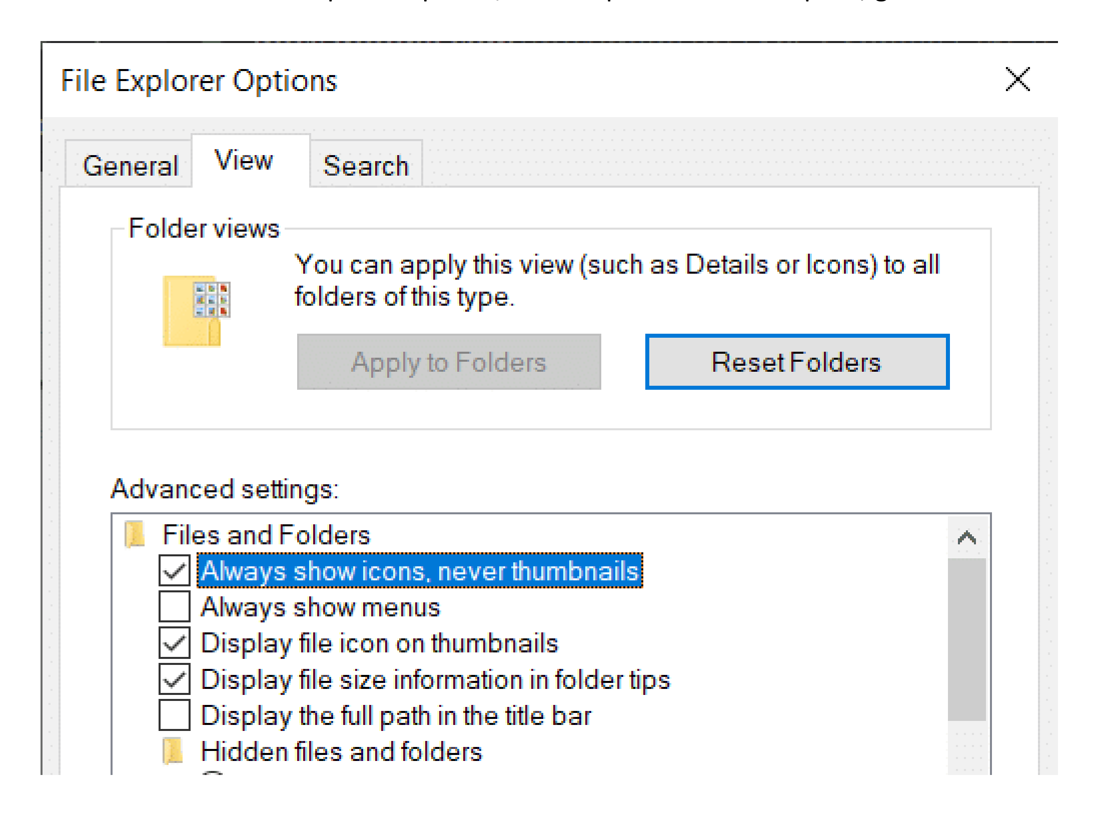
If you have more than one hard drive partition, you will have to clean all of them up to remove this issue from your computer. We recommend repeating this process to get rid of all the thumbnails. You do not have to worry about the thumbnails we are getting rid of, as they will be regenerated very quickly. We will just be resetting the thumbnail cache when we do this.

Solution 6: Disable The Folder Thumbnails Through The File Explorer Options

If you did not know, there was more than one way to turn off the Thumbnails. In this solution, we will be using the File Explorer Options window to disable them. The reasons behind why we are doing this aren't quite definite, so we spared the explanation so that you, readers, do not get more confused.

These are the steps for the second method to get rid of the folder and file thumbnails on your computer.

1. Type in File options in the search box on your computer.
2. Under the search results, click on the **File Explorer Options** (Control Panel) option to open it. You can open this in the Control Panel window, directly.
3. Once the File Explorer options/Folder options window opens, go into the **View** tab.



4. Now, find the Advanced Settings section and click on the **Always show icons, never thumbnails** checkbox under the Files and Folders sub-section.
5. Select **Apply** and **Ok** to save these changes.

You'll now be able to see the icons of the files and folders, but no thumbnails will be generated for them until this operation is reversed.

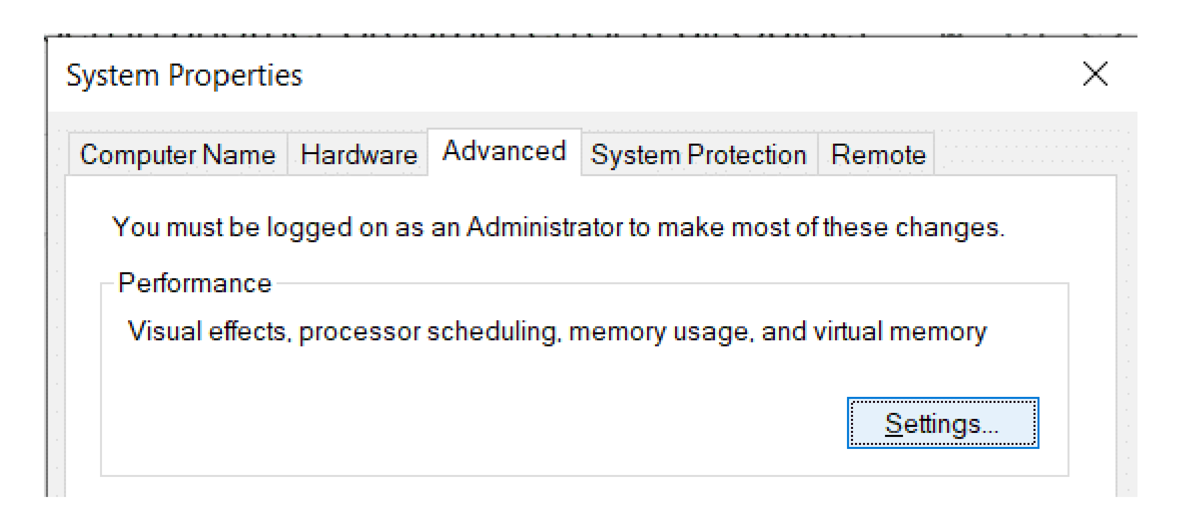
Note: The File Explorer options window is also known as the Folder options window.

Solution 7: Deactivate The Thumbnails Feature Via The Performance Options

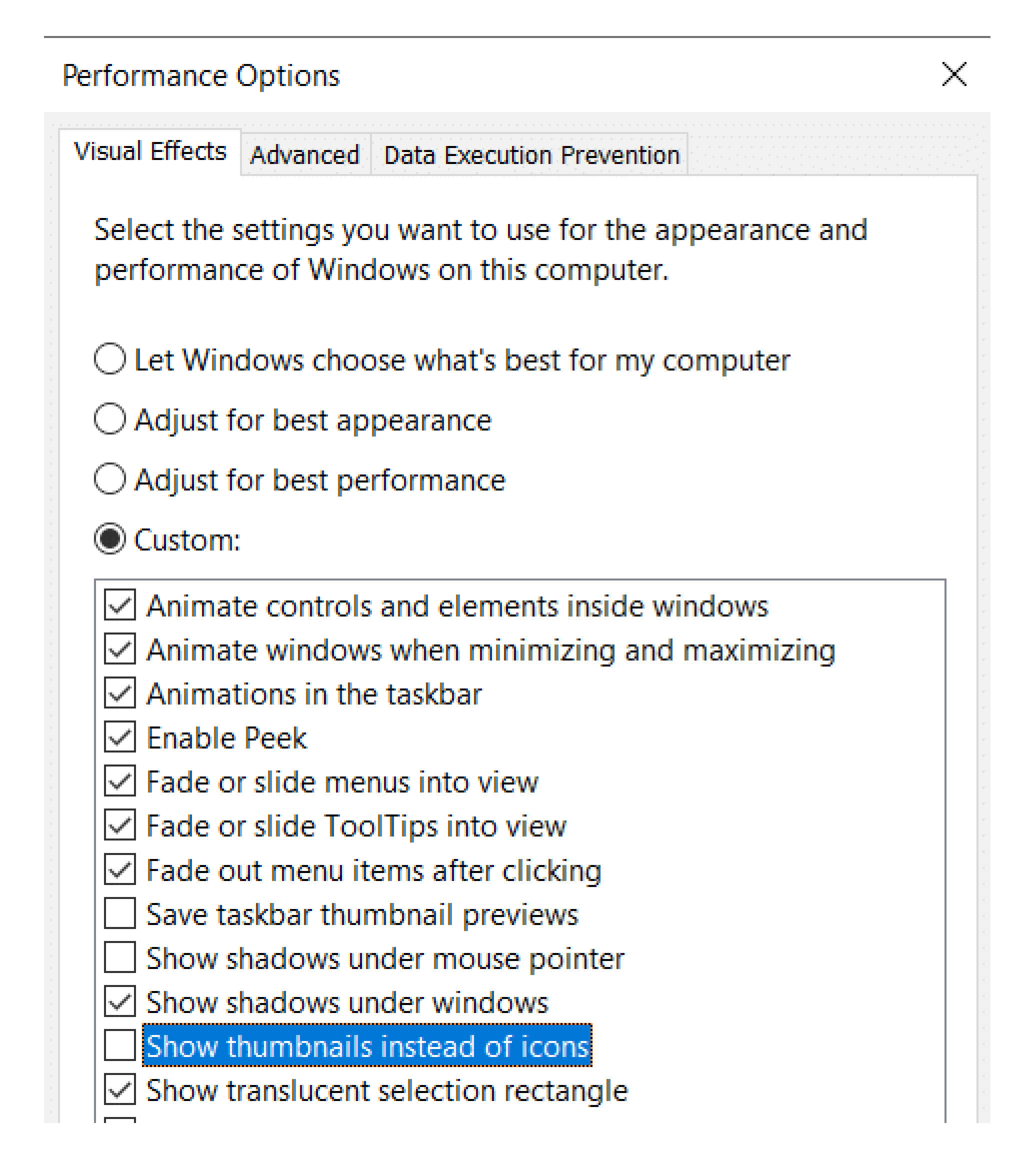
If the above method doesn't work for you, you can also use the computer's performance options to disable the thumbnails. This is another option for you to try to fix the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error, at least temporarily.

This is the procedure to use the Advanced system settings to disable the file thumbnails –

1. Type in **Advanced System Settings** in the search bar and open the **View Advanced System Settings** – Control Panel application from the search results. This will take you to the Advanced tab in the System Properties window.
2. Under the Performance section, select the only button – **Settings**.



3. In the Visual Effects tab, click on the **Custom:** radio button. This will enable access to enabling or disabling a lot of the Windows OS visual features.
4. Now, uncheck the **Show thumbnails instead of icons** option and Apply these changes.



5. Close the window after you are done making these changes.

Try carrying out the action on the target file and see if it proceeds with it.

Solution 8: Delete The Folder Thumbnails Through The Registry Editor

The last method to remove the thumbnails on your computer is to use the Registry Editor.

The Registry Editor is a [Windows tool that was placed in the Operating System](#) (OS) to make, edit, and delete registries and their values on the Windows OS. We'll use this to disable the thumbnails.

To do this, these steps will help you.

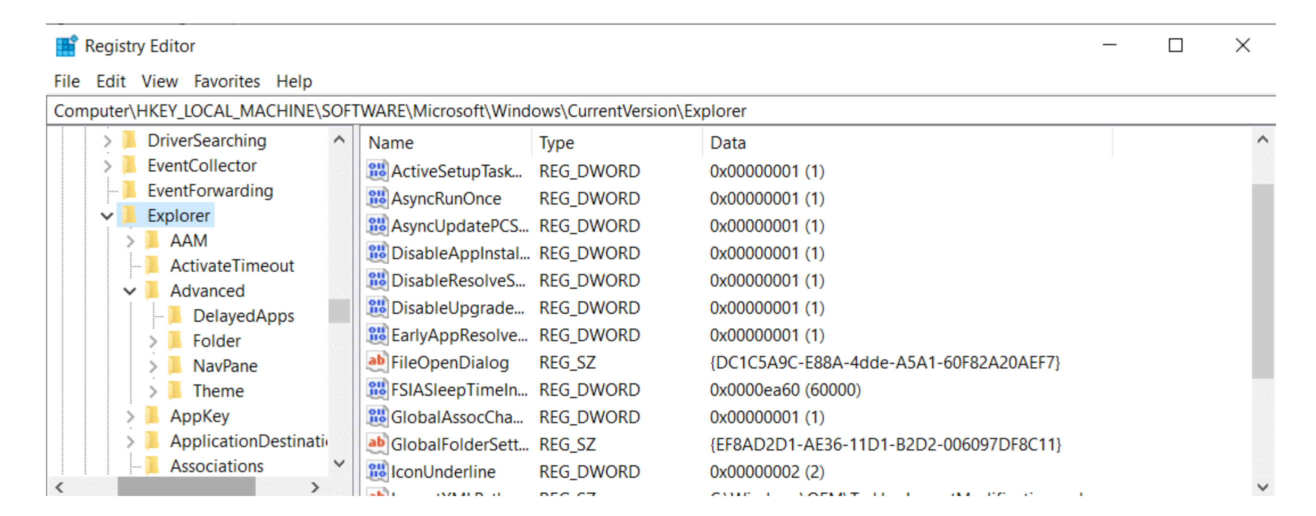
1. Open **Registry Editor** with the help of the search text box or by executing the **regedit** command on the Run tool (Windows key + R).
2. Once the Registry Editor window appears on your screen, go to this directory:

Computer\ HKEY_CURRENT_USERS\ SOFTWARE\ Microsoft\ Windows\ CurrentVersion\ Explorer\ Advanced

3. Find the **IconsOnly DWORD registry** and double-click this registry to open it.
4. Change the Set Value data to 1 and click on the Ok button.

If this doesn't work for you, use this alternative registry editor step.

1. Go to the **Computer\ HKEY_CURRENT_USERS\ SOFTWARE\ Microsoft\ Windows\ CurrentVersion\ Explorer** directory.



2. Here, find the DisableThumbnails DWORD registry. Most computers do not have this and so, it has to be manually created.
3. Right-click on an empty space on the right side of the window and select **New** and choose the **DWORD (32-bit)** Value option from the sub-context menu.
4. Rename this DWORD to DisableThumbnails and open it.
5. Set its Value Data to 0 and save the registry DWORD by clicking on the **OK** button.

After all these steps for disabling the thumbnail generation on your computer, your PC should no longer be able to load thumbnails for files. You will have to navigate through the file explorer with the help of the icons.

Thumbnails are a major reason for causing the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error but there are only temporary fixes that have to be repeated again and again to kill the error message when it keeps recurring.

Solution 9: Kill And Restart Windows Explorer Process

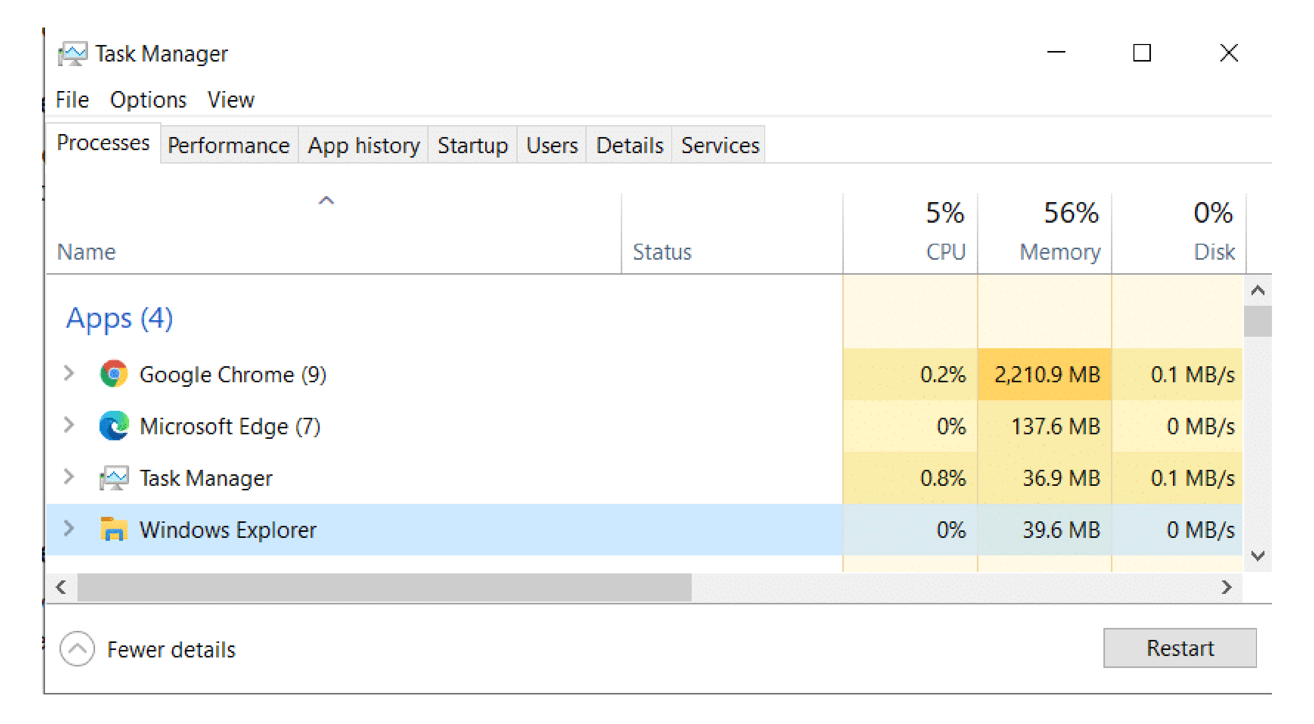
When you face the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' issue on your computer, you will be able to notice that the Windows File Explorer plays a huge role in it. One of the best solutions to this issue is for the user to restart File Explorer process/task through the Windows Task Manager as this will reset the task completely and thereby get rid of temporary bugs and glitches.

There are two methods for restarting Windows Explorer on a Windows 10 computer.

Method 1

The first method involves using the Windows Explorer process in the Task Manager's Processes tab.

1. Open **Task Manager** on your Windows computer by pushing the keyboard hotkey shortcuts (press Ctrl + Shift + Esc) on your keyboard. You can also launch the Task Termination window (press Ctrl + Alt + Del) and select Task Manager to open this tool. The third way to open it is to right-click on the Taskbar and select Task Manager from the pop-up menu.
2. Go into the **Processes** tab and navigate to the **Windows Explorer** process.

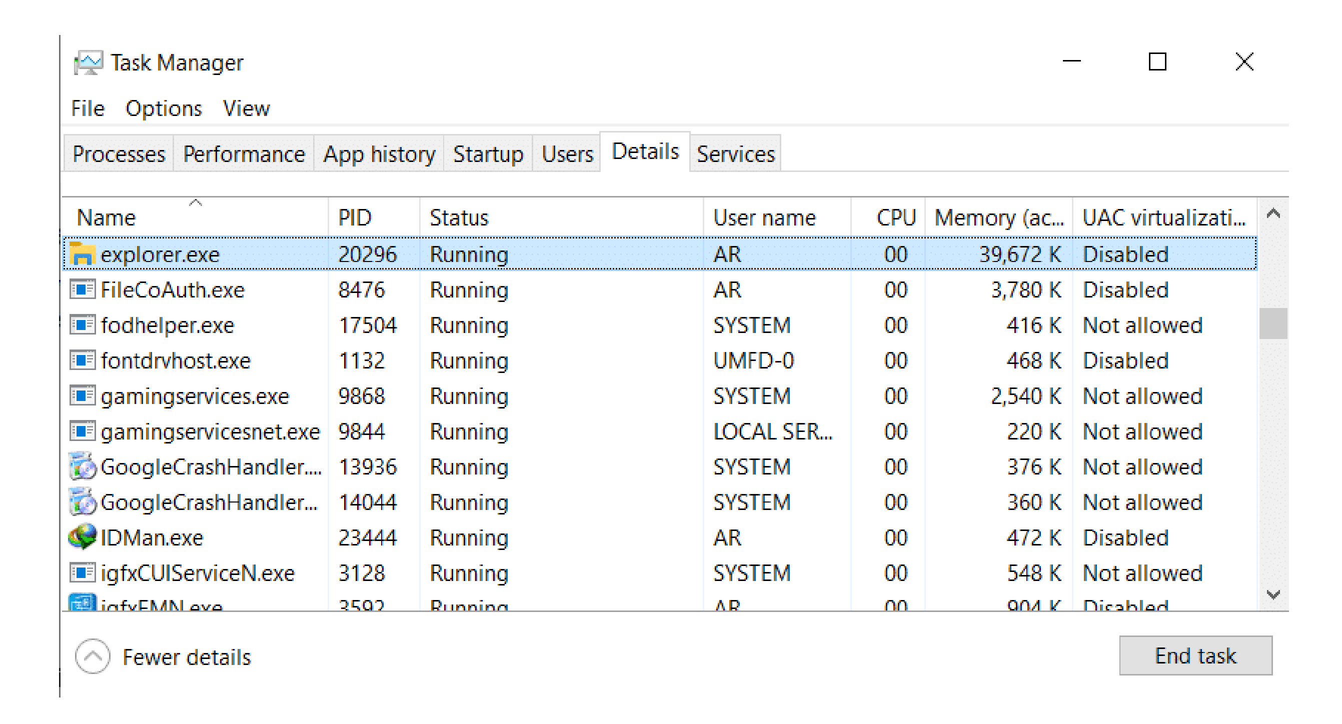


3. Now, open its pop-up menu by right-clicking on it and selecting the Restart option in it. You can also select the process and click on the **Restart** button at the bottom of the screen.

Method 2

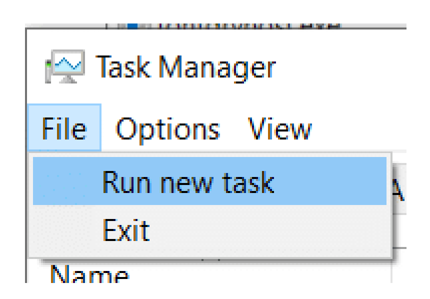
If you want to use the other method, you still would have to do it through the Details tab, with the file explorer executable.

1. Launch the **Task Manager** window and go into the **Details** tab.
2. From the list of all the running tasks, find the **explorer.exe**.



This is the executable file for the Windows File Explorer.

3. Click on the explorer.exe and press the **End task** button, which is at the bottom-right corner of the Task Manager window.



4. Once the file explorer is killed, draw the **File** menu and choose the **Run new task** option.
5. In the Create new task window that appears, enter **explorer** and press **Enter** or click on the **Ok** button.

This will close and restart File Explorer process on your computer.

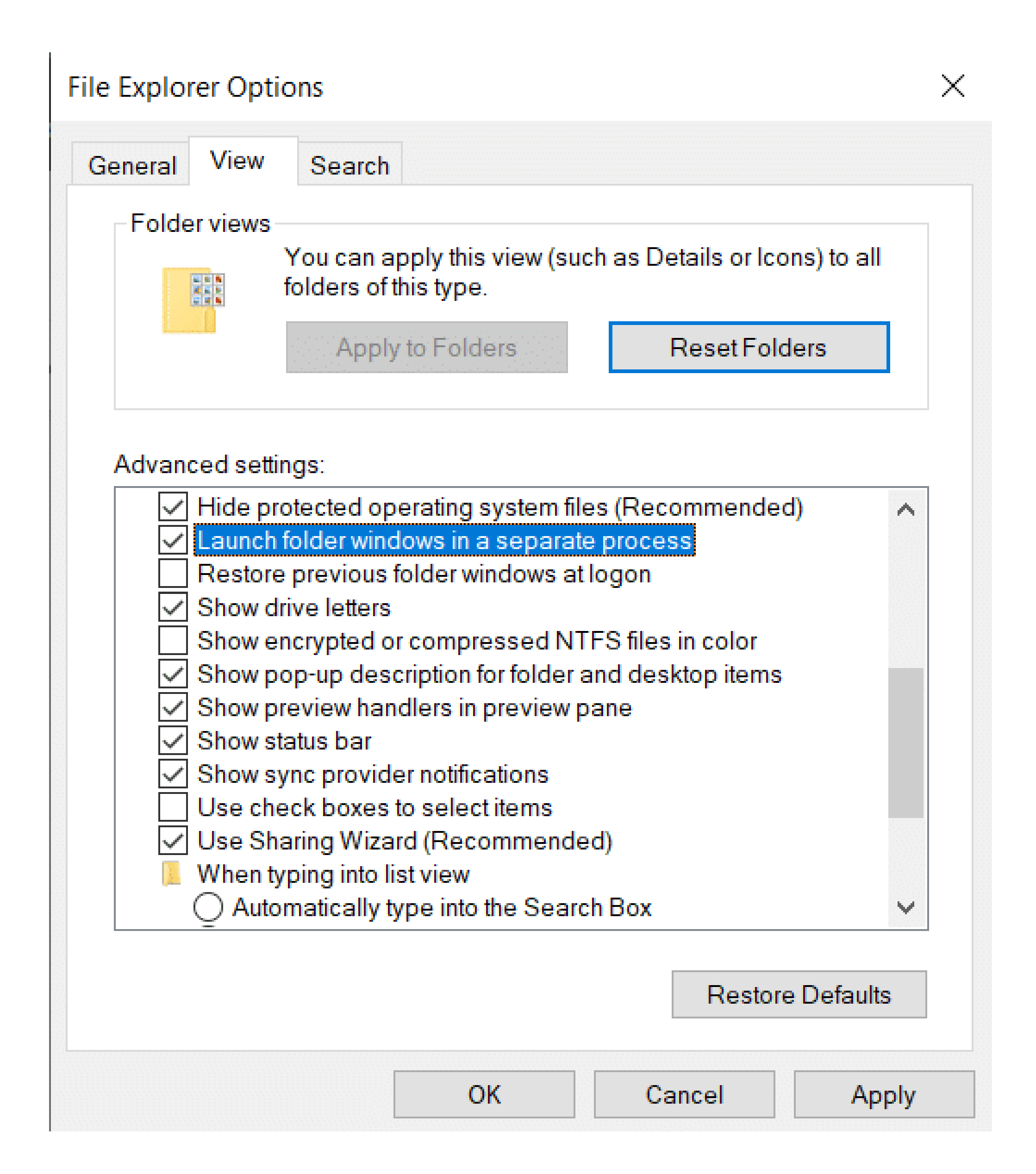
This solution might help fix this error for a short period of time, which means that this is just a workaround. There, still, are chances for the issue to come up. If you want a permanent resolve, you can proceed with the below steps.

Solution 10: Launch Folder Windows Explorer As Separate Processes

Since the ‘action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program’ is caused by issues with the Windows File Explorer, you can try launching the File Explorer windows alone. This is highly advantageous as it helps your system get through crashes and navigate through a frozen PC caused by folder issues. The file explorer as separate process can help the RAM pay exclusive attention to each of the folders and thereby, help them run efficiently.

You can launch the folder windows as lone processes through this procedure.

1. Search for the **File Explorer Options** or open it through the Control Panel. If you choose to launch it through your Control Panel window, you have to set the view mode to large icons.
2. Go into the **View** tab and locate the Advanced Settings section.
3. Inside this, check the **Launch folder windows in a separate process** option.



4. Now, select **Apply** and then, **OK** to save the changes you made and close the window.

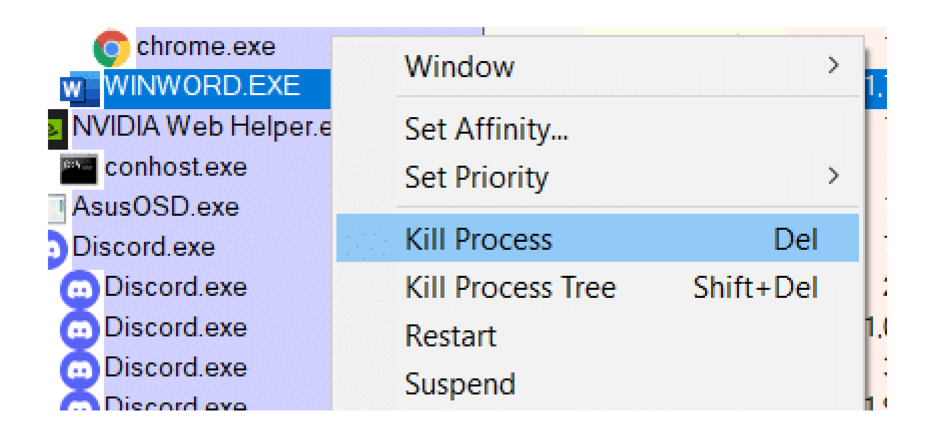
After you launch folder windows, every folder you open is run as separate processes and not as a group. You can check the task manager. If you feel like this feature is what is causing the problem, you can uncheck this option to disable it. See if both these solutions, stop this problem from coming up.

See also How to Check VRAM on Windows 10

Solution 11: Kill The Process With The Process Explorer

The Process Explorer is an upgraded version of the Windows Task Manager. Besides displaying information about running processes and programs, it also shows the statistics of the DLL files and the memory-mapped files that are being put to use by the computer.

Because we tried ending the program which did not let said action be performed on it through the Task Manager, it is worth trying this through the Process Explorer. It is quite simple to end this process but there is no guarantee that this will fix the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error.



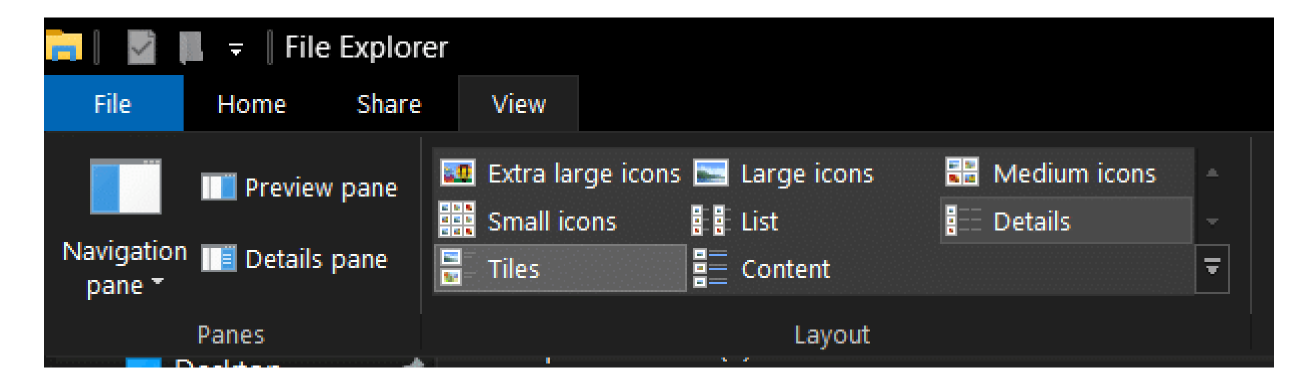
The Process Explorer has a layout that is very similar to the Task Manager. You will just have to locate the troublesome process, right-click on it and select Kill Process. If you wish to end all sub-processes, you will have to click on the Kill Process Tree option.

Solution 12: Switch To A Different Folder View Mode

Now, this might sound very unusual and totally unrelated. But changing the view layout of the folders and file icons on the file explorer might be a resolve to the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error.

This has to be the shortest step for fixing this error. Take a look for yourself.

1. Launch a **File Explorer** window (press Windows + E).
2. Click on the **View** tab and select one of the view layouts.



You have a set of options like – Extra large icons, Large icons, Medium icons, Small icons, List or Details.

Now, switching to any layout may fix or cause the error we are trying to fix. The last three layout options might help you avoid it.

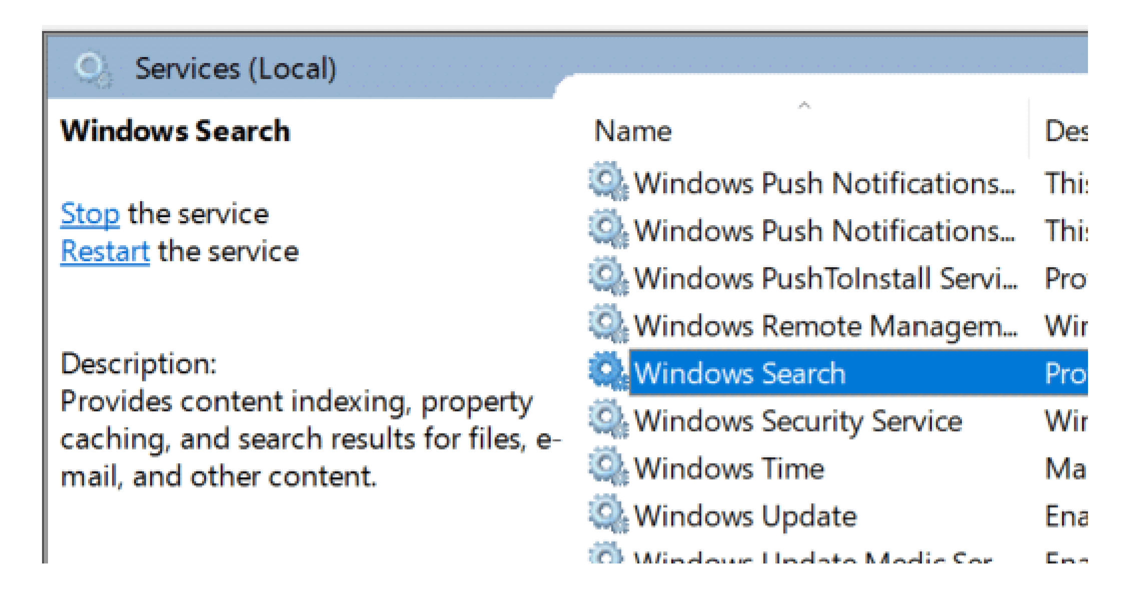
Solution 13: Turn Off The Windows Search Feature

The Windows Search feature is what we have been using to search for installed applications and created files on our computers to get instant search results. Not only does this search the computer but also provides a bunch of results from the internet and also allows users to filter it. This is the feature that appears when you press the Windows key and S, together.

For some reason, this search feature has also been narrowed down to be one of the causes for the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error on your Windows system.

This is the procedure to disable the Windows Search service/feature.

1. Ironically, search for the Indexing options feature and open it. This can also be found in the Control Panel.
2. In the Indexing Options window, click on the **Modify** button at the lower-left part of the screen.
3. Uncheck the options in the Change selected locations section and click on the OK button.
4. After this, launch the **Services** window (services.msc). You can launch this through the Run dialog box or the search menu.
5. Scroll down to the **Windows Search** option and double-click on it.



6. Now, bring down the Startup type drop-down menu and select the Disabled option.
7. Then, select **Stop** to kill this service completely. You can start it up again whenever you want it.
8. Now, **Apply** these changes and select **OK** to exit this window.

If you use this feature quite often, you might not want to disable it. Go ahead with the next solution if you do not want to stop the Windows Search feature. But if you are willing to try this, there is nothing to worry about as this can be re-enabled.

Solution 14: Close The Windows Explorer Window And Open It Again

The simplest workaround for this issue is to close the file explorer window of the file or folder, that is causing problems while interacting with them, and reopen them. The motive of this is to end the process in the background along with the issues that can possibly appear.

When it is reopened, there are chances, but no assurance, that this will get rid of the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error. This provides the same effects that take place when you restart Windows Explorer on your computer.

Solution 15: Boot Up The PC In Safe Mode

The Windows Safe Mode can be used to narrow down on issues that can occur on your computer. This will boot up the computer with minimal access to the features. You will have only the most important features on your computer.

We will be attempting to launch the OS on your computer and try performing the action that caused the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error when attempted to, in the file explorer.

This is one of the procedures to launch the computer in Safe mode.

1. Bring up the Start menu and push the Shift key on your computer.

2. Without removing your finger, click on the **Restart** button, which is in the Power section.
3. When the system finishes rebooting, you will see the blue Safe mode launching screen. Here, you will have to take the below path:

Troubleshoot > Advanced options > Startup Settings > Restart

4. You will be taken to a window where you'll be able to choose the different modes you can boot your PC into.
5. Select Safe mode and then try doing what you wanted to. If your actions require a network, boot your PC in Safe Mode with networking.

Some of the methods that follow might require the Command Prompt tool. It would be very helpful if you opted to boot up your computer in start Command Prompt with the system booting up in Safe Mode. We will be running some commands later if the regular safe mode does not work.

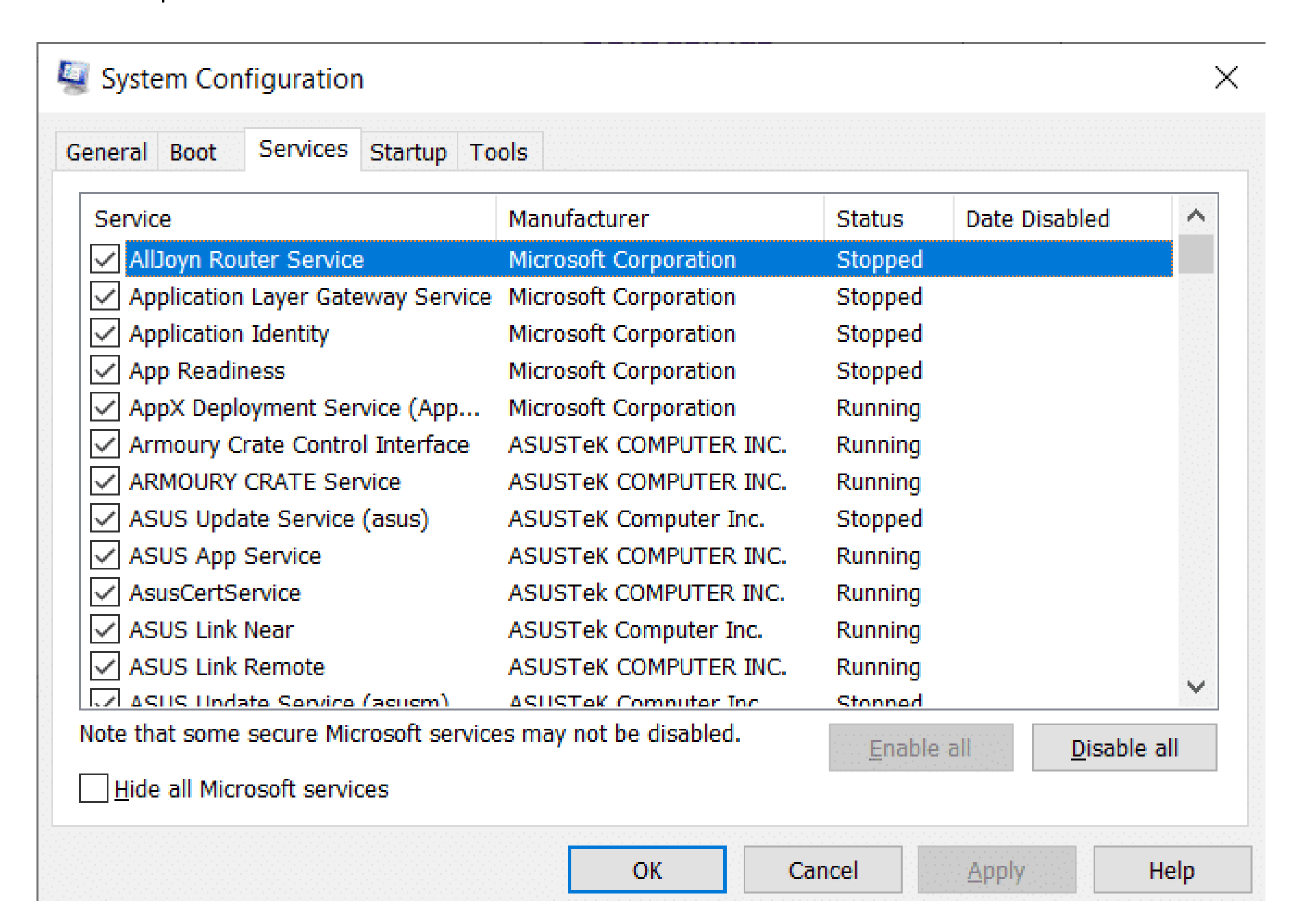
Solution 16: Do A Clean Boot Up Of Your PC

A Clean boot is much like launching your computer with Safe mode configurations, but with limited drivers and startup programs. This is usually done to determine the process or application that is responsible for an issue on the computer.

In our current situation facing the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error, this can be of great help as some third-party applications can be responsible for this issue.

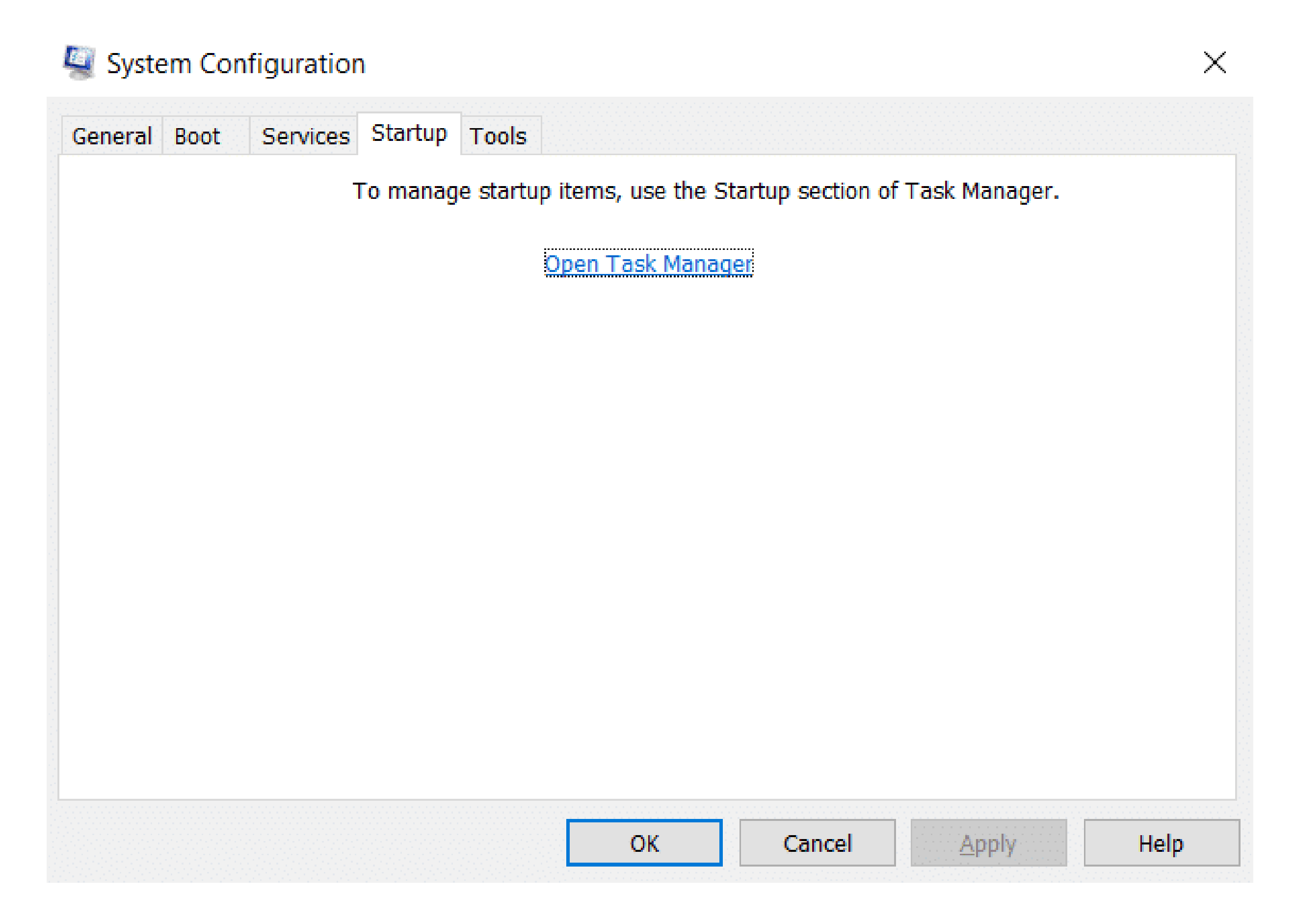
Here are the steps to do a clean boot of your computer.

1. Bring up the **Run** (press Windows key + R) tool and run the **msconfig** command, which should launch the System Configuration window.
2. Expand the **Services tab** and click on the **Hide all Microsoft Devices** checkbox.

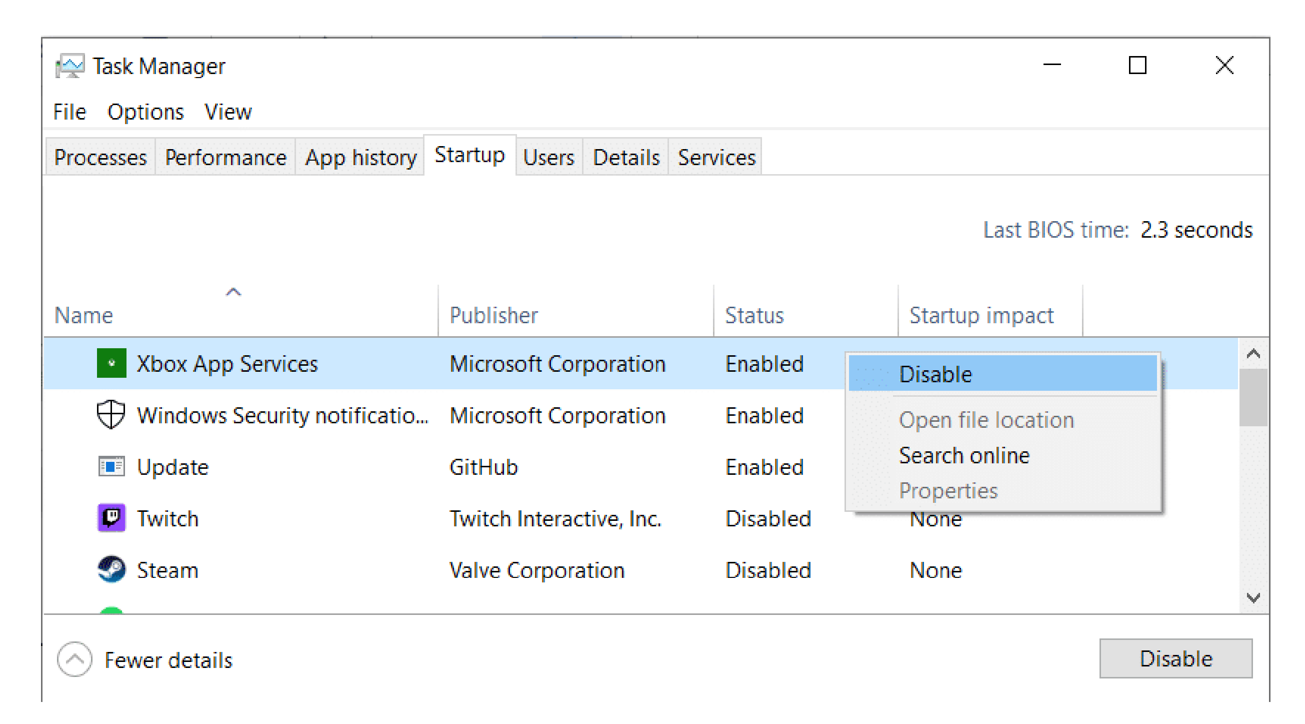


3. Press the **Disable all** button, to stop all the processes from running.

4. Then, move on to the Startup tab and select the only option – the **Open Task Manager** link.



5. When the Task Manager window opens, disable all the applications in the window. You will have to right-click on the application and select the **Disable** option.



This will stop all these applications from launching when the system boots up.

6. Return to the System Configuration window and select the **Apply** and **OK** buttons.
7. Close Task Manager and all the windows running in the foreground and restart your computer.

When the computer boots up again, you will only be able to access the applications and processes that we're built into the PC on purchase. You will then have to re-enable startup services one by one and see if the issue exists now.

Solution 17: Switch From The Adobe PDF Reader To A Different One

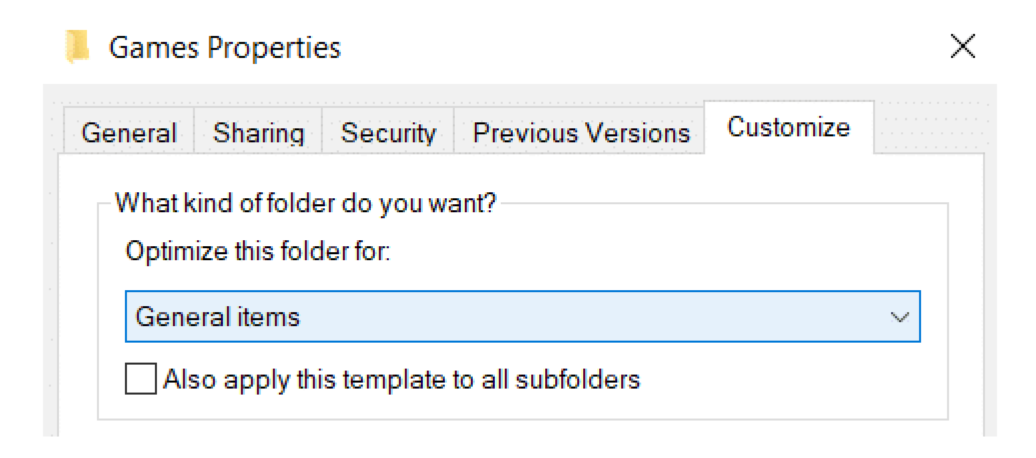
The Adobe Acrobat PDF viewer can cause this File Explorer issue. To check if it is, you will have to uninstall this application and use a different tool to open PDF files. If you still face the error, without the Adobe PDF viewer, you can reinstall it again and move to the next methods.

Solution 18: Optimize The File/Folder Properties

Optimizing the file or folder can allow the users to access certain parts of the file that are not usually available. This might let you do the action instead of showing the file explorer action not performing error message.

These are the steps to optimize your file or folder to open up accessibilities.

1. Find the file and right-click on the **Properties** option.
2. Go into the **Customize** tab and find the **Optimize this folder for** drop-down menu.



3. From this menu, select the type of file that is causing this error. You may also need to check the **Also apply this template to all subfolders** checkbox, depending on your system configurations.
4. Click on the **Apply** and **OK** button to keep your changes.

Solution 19: Delete The Thumbs.db File With The Help Of The Command Prompt Tool

The Thumbs.db file is the database that is responsible for Windows users to view small icons, when the file explorer view is set to Thumbnail view. Since this is not a very important file and can fix the file explorer action not performed error, we will be deleting this to see if it works.

A lot of forums have suggested doing this through the Command Prompt tool and that is exactly what we are going to be doing.

1. Launch an elevated version of the Command Prompt tool i.e, with administrative privileges. You can also use the Windows PowerShell tool to run this command if you do not have the Command Prompt tool.
2. When the CMD window appears, type in these commands –

- **Drive letter:**
- **del /ashy /s thumbs.db**

3. Execute them one at a time by hitting **Enter** each time.

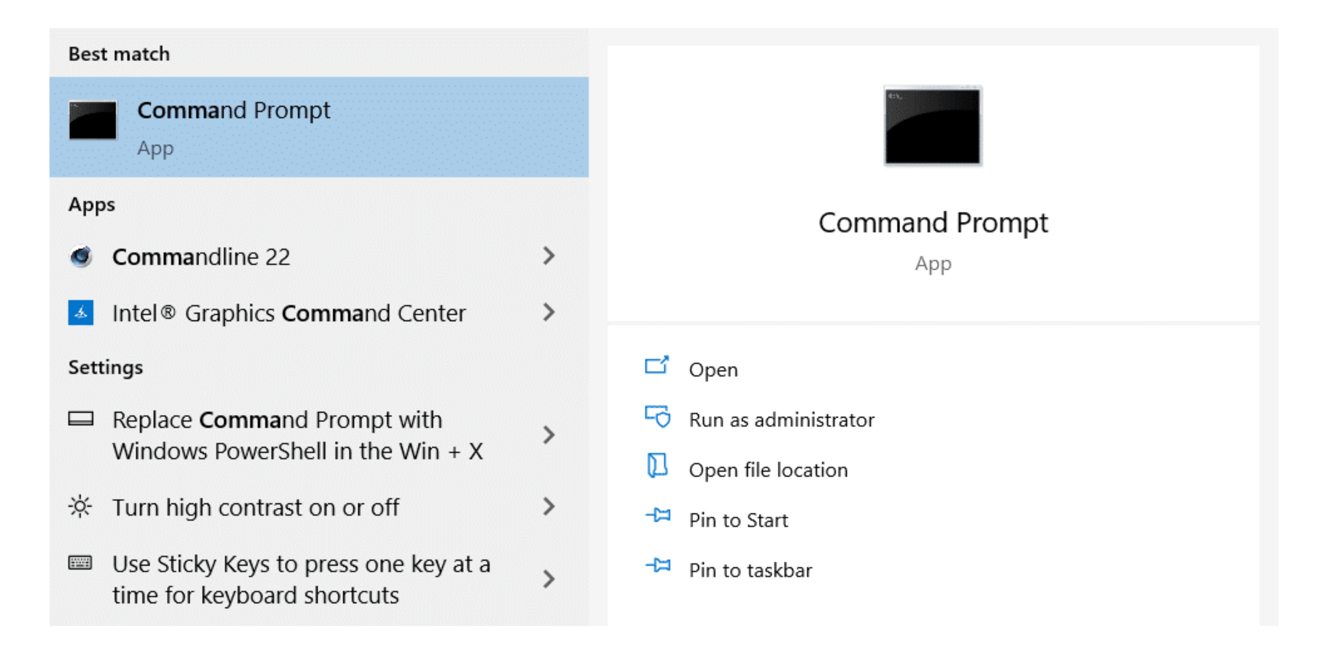
Solution 20: Remove The Troublesome File Through The Command Prompt Utility

Command Prompt is a very useful tool. It enables the users to access every aspect of the Windows PC, with some commands. We'll try deleting the file that is causing us a lot of trouble, with the command prompt tool, to see if it helps.

It will be very efficient if your computer is booted up in safe mode with command prompt. If not, you will have to open Command Prompt as the system administrator.

These are the steps and the command to delete the irksome file.

1. Open **Task Manager** through any of the known methods.
2. In this window, kill the **Windows Explorer** process. Do not restart Windows Explorer instead of killing it. For this, you will have to go to the Details tab and end the explorer.exe process.
3. Then, search for the **Command Prompt** tool and choose the **Run as administrator** option in the search results.



4. Run this command by typing it in and hitting your Enter key.

DEL /F /S /Q /A C:UsersUserNameDesktop"File name"

If the file is a text document, you will have to add the format along with the file name.

5. Restart the PC after executing this line.

To end the Windows Explorer process, you can also use the Process Explorer application.

Solution 21: Update Your Computer's .NET Framework

If you have a version of the .NET framework installed on your computer, updating it or reinstalling it might help with the fixing of the file explorer. Users will know that .NET is free and can be downloaded from the .NET framework page on the Microsoft website. If you are willing to, you can try installing all the available versions of the .NET framework and see if the problem evaporates.

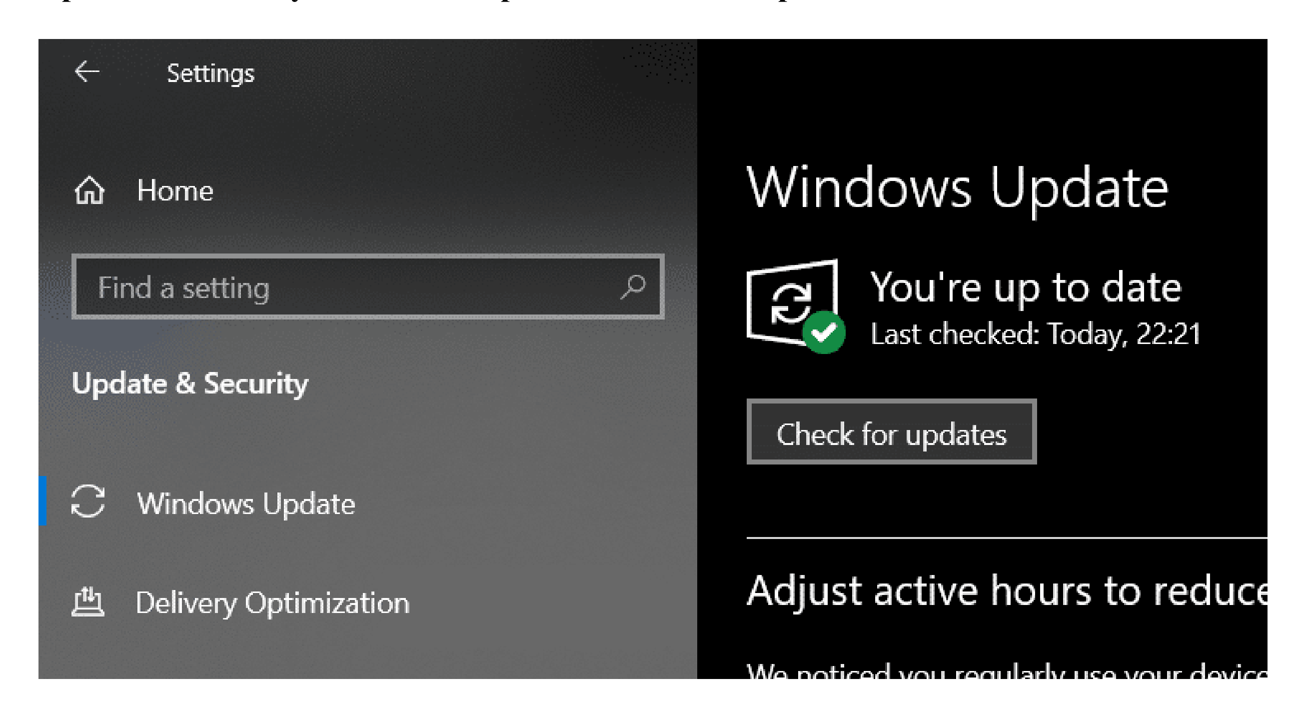
Solution 22: Download Updates For The Windows OS

Updating the Windows OS can help fix a lot of issues that come up on your computer because a lot of new bugs are fixed with every new patch update, which comes out every Tuesday.

Here's how you can check for updates and download them on a Windows 10 system.

1. Open the Windows Settings (press Windows key + I) application and follow this path-

Updates & Security > Windows Update > Check for Updates



2. Your computer will check the internet for available updates. If there are updates, click on the **Download and install** option.
3. Once these downloads are complete, reboot your computer by selecting the **Update and Restart** option.

Solution 23: Reconfigure The System Security Settings

Your system's security configuration can be the reason why you see the file explorer action not performed error message. To fix this, you can make changes to it with these steps.

1. Open the file's properties and go into the **Security** tab.
2. On this page, make note of all the groups and users.
3. Click on the **Edit** button and then, in the next window press the **Add** button.
4. Type in the username of your choice in the text field and select the Check Names option. Then, click on the **OK** button.
5. Select **Apply** and **OK** to save this configuration.

See also How to Download Standard SATA AHCI Controller Driver on Windows

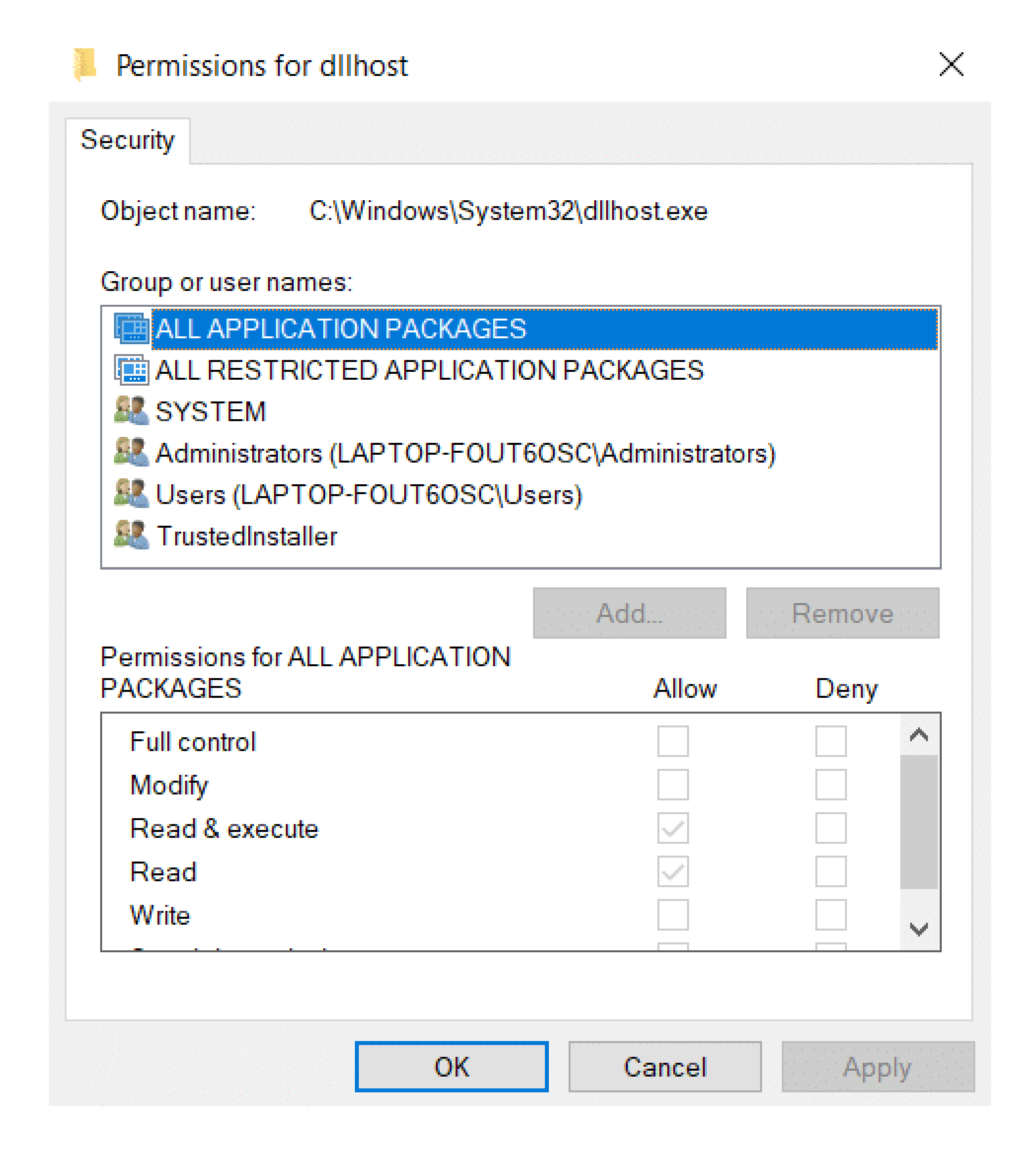
Solution 24: Change The Security Settings Configuration For The dllhost.Exe Process

Another solution for the file explorer: action cannot be performed because a file is running in another program issue is to make changes in the security permissions of the dllhost.exe process, which is the executable file for the COM surrogate process.

With these steps, you can modify the security permissions for the COM surrogate executable.

1. Open **Task Manager** on your computer by pressing the Ctrl + Shift + Esc keys on your keyboard. You can also open this window through the taskbar context menu.
2. Go into the **Details** tab and find the **dllhost.exe** task in this window.

3. Right-click on it and select the **Properties** option from the context menu.
4. Move to the **Security tab** and select **Edit**.



5. Click on the **Administrators** group and check the **Full Control** option, under the Allow section.
6. **Apply** the new changes and click on the **OK** button to quit the window.

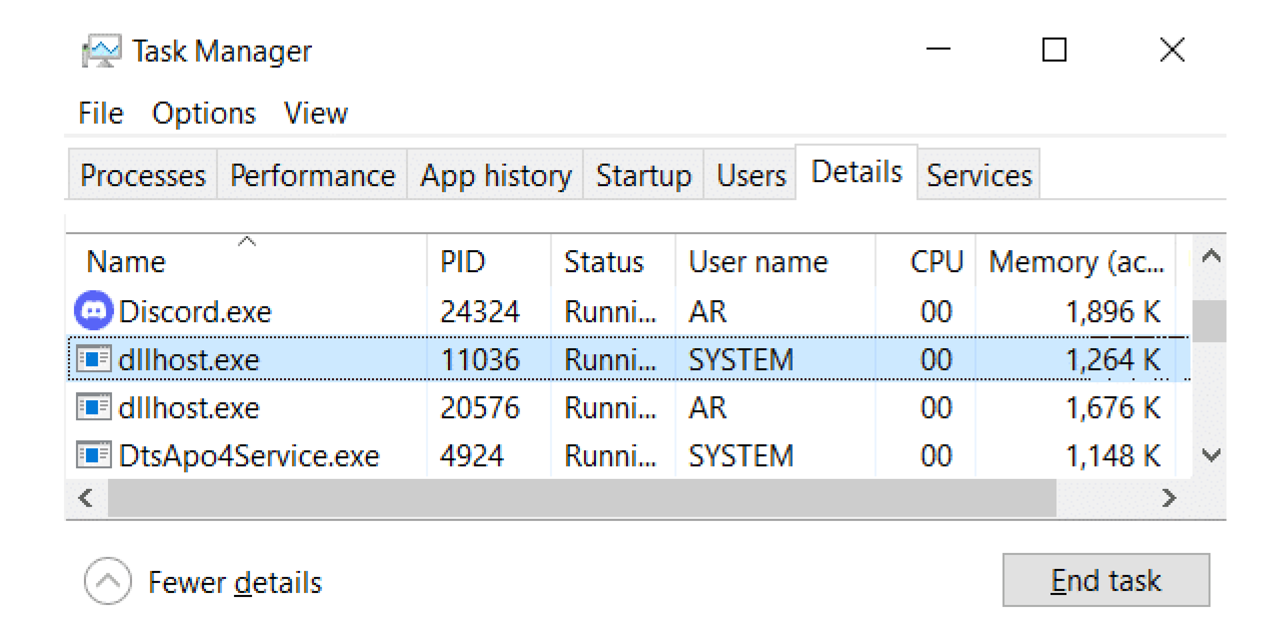
If this does not work for you, try these steps after ending the COM surrogate process in the Task Manager.

Solution 25: End The COM Surrogate Process

The COM surrogate process (dllhost.exe) is a Windows Process that generates COM objects for Windows computers. This could be a malicious file in disguise and can be responsible for the action can't be completed error.

If you wish to end this, use this procedure.

1. Launch the **Task Manager** window (press Ctrl + Shift + Esc), go into the **Details** tab and locate the **dllhost.exe** process.

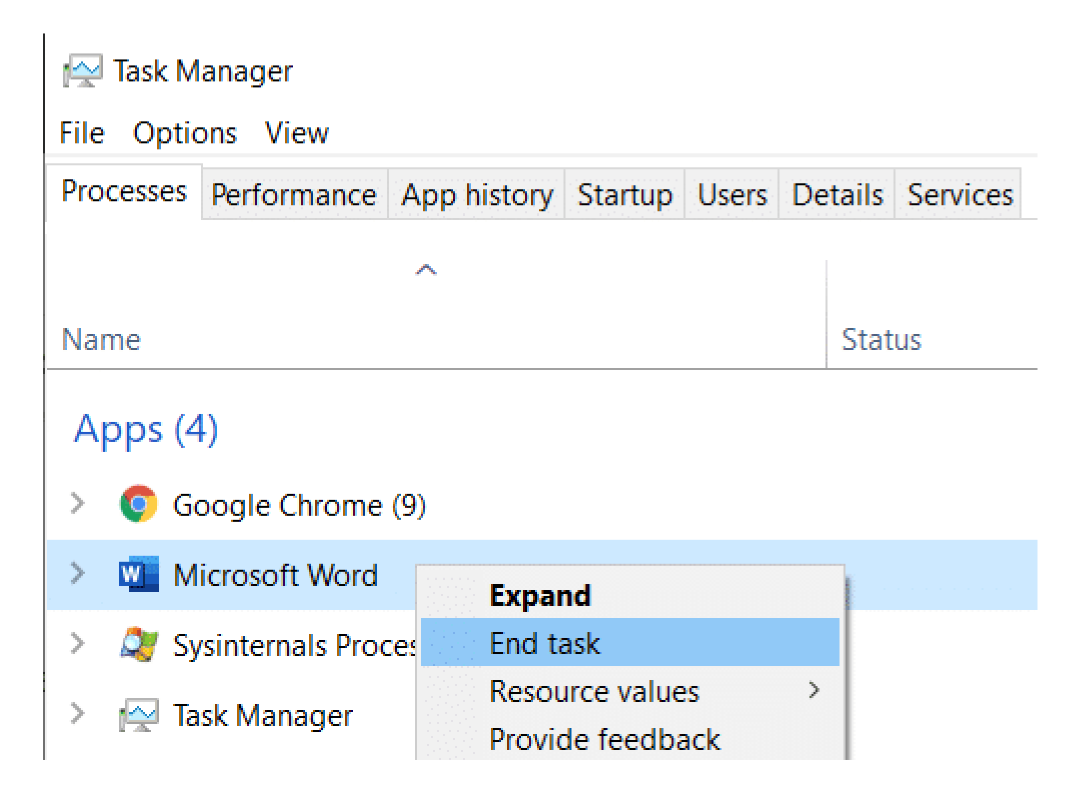


2. Now, right-click on it and select the **End task** option.

Reboot your system to save this configuration and check if the issue persists.

Solution 26: End The Process In The Task Manager

An obvious solution to this error is to end the process in the Task Manager and run it again to see if it is fixed.



Users will simply have to open the Task Manager, locate the task, and end it by right-clicking on it and selecting End task.

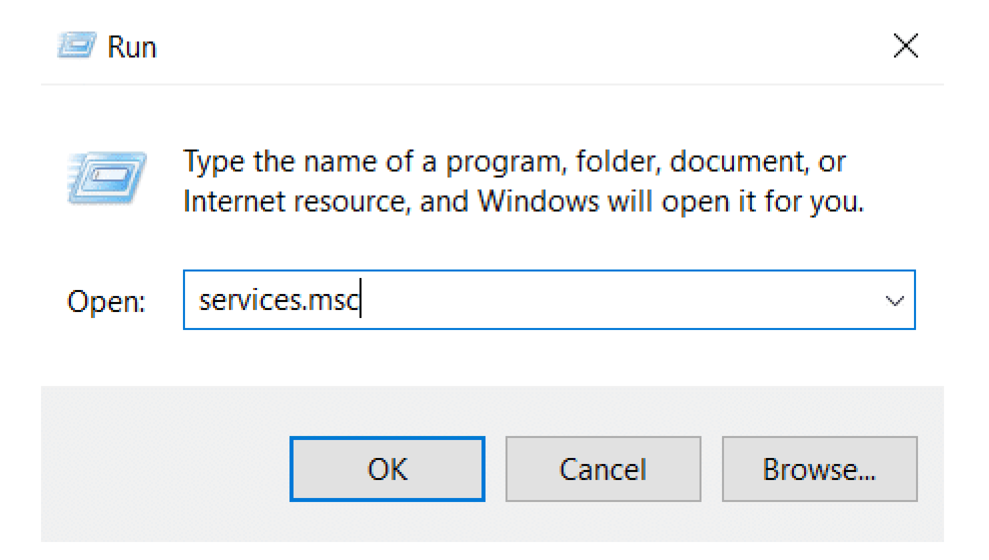
Solution 27: Turn The HomeGroup Feature Off

HomeGroup is the Windows feature that can be used to connect two or more computers over a home network for sharing pictures, videos, music, and other files. This is a useful feature but this feature can cause the ‘action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program’ error on your Windows System.

Some computers may not have this option. If your computer is one of those without the Homegroup feature, skip this solution and move to the next one.

If you think disabling this could help fix this error, try these steps.

1. Search for the **HomeGroup** application or use the Control Panel to navigate to this application and open it.
2. Locate the **Leave the homegroup** link in the left pane menu and click on it.
3. In the window that opens, click on **Leave the homegroup** again.
4. Press the **Finish** button and the window will be closed.
5. Now, open the Run dialog box (press Windows key + R) and execute the **services.msc** command.



6. When the Microsoft Services window appears on your screen, navigate to the **Homegroup Provider** service.
7. Right-click on this service and choose the **Properties** option from the pop-up menu.
8. In the Startup type drop-down menu, select the Disabled option.
9. Do the same for the **Homegroup Listener** service, which is located right below the Homegroup Provider service in the Services window.
10. Once you disabled both these services at startup, close the window and reboot your system to save the changes you made.

It is important to disable to service too and not just leave the homegroup, since every aspect of this feature could be the factor that causes the issue we're dealing with. If this fix does not work for you, you can keep it disabled or re-enable the HomeGroup depending on if you will need this feature.

Solution 28: Disable The Sharing Feature For The File

Sharing the file with users who use the computer through local networks might also be a reason for the file explorer action can't be performed issue on your computer. The only solution to this error, when file sharing is responsible for it, is to stop sharing.

Stopping the file-sharing feature for a file is easy with these steps.

1. Go to the file that has been annoying you by not letting you work with it.
2. Right-click on it and move your cursor over the **Share with** option.
3. Now, select the **Stop sharing** option.

This will prevent the file from being accessed by any users that can access your computer through a local network.

Solution 29: Unmount And Eject The Virtual CD/DVD Drives (Magic ISO)

If you use apps like Magic ISO for mounting discs, they can not delete ISO files as it can give rise to issues like the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' error.

1. Launch the **Magic ISO** tool.
2. Open the **Tools** menu and go to the **Virtual CD/DVD ROM** option.
3. Select the **Unmount All Drives** button.

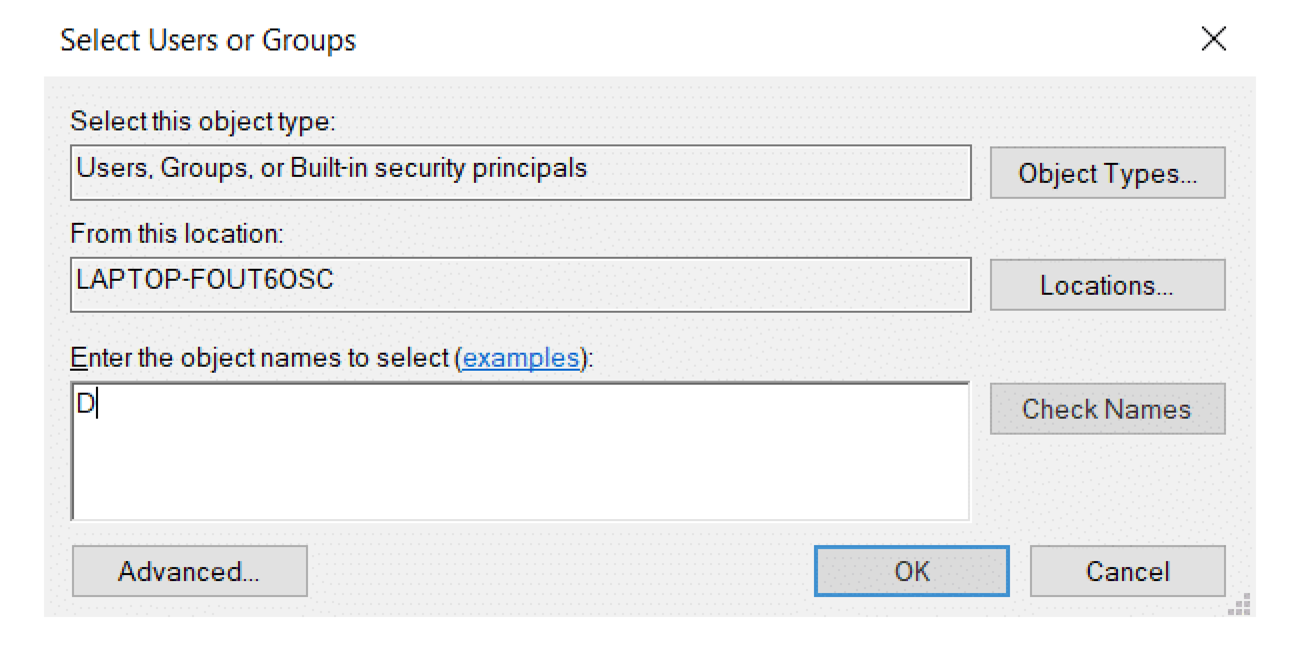
You can also just right-click on the drive in the This PC window, and select the Eject option.

Solution 30: Remove All Inherited Permissions For The File/Folder

When you disable inheritance for your files, it can not only fix the action can't be performed as the file is open in another program issue but can cause a set of new problems for your computer.

Do this to disable the inherited permissions for the files:

1. Right-click on the file that can't be worked with and open the **Properties** window.
2. Here, go to the **Security tab** and select **Advanced**, at the bottom of the window.
3. Click on **Disable Inheritance** and in the window that appears, select the **Remove all inherited permissions** from this object.
4. Then, click on the **Enable inheritance** button and select the **Add** link.
5. In the Permission Entry for test dialog box, click on the **Select a Principal** link.
6. Type in your username in the text box and select the **Check Names** button. Then, press the **OK** button to add this principal.



7. Under the Basic permissions section, click on the **Full control** checkbox and click on the **OK** button to save these changes.

Solution 31: Make Changes In The Computer's Group Policy Through The Local Group Policy Editor

The Local Group Policy Editor is the Microsoft Management Console that we'll be using to change the Group Policy settings of your computer so that they can be used to connect with websites and other domain names.

We are going to be using this tool to reconfigure the computer's group policy so that it can fix the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' issue.

Do as these steps instruct you to edit your group policy.

1. Press Windows and R key to bring up the Run utility on your computer. You can also use the start menu and the search box to launch the Run tool.
2. Execute the **gpedit.msc** command by typing it in the Open field and hitting the **Enter key** or clicking on the **Ok button**. This is the launch command for the Group Policy Editor and will open this window when run.
3. Take this route in the Local Group Policy Editor window:

User Configuration > Administrative Templates > Windows Components > FIle explorer

4. Once you're in this location, open the Turn off caching of thumbnails in hidden thumbs.db files option by double-clicking on it. This is located in the right-side menu panel.
5. In the window that appears, click on the **Enabled** radio button and then, select **Apply** and **OK** to save the changes.

This will disable the thumbnails that are displayed in your File Explorer and fix the issue you are facing. This might seem like a setback but we don't really need thumbnails on our computers. Not only does this fix the 'action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program' issue but also saves a lot of storage and RAM usage by not generating thumbnails for the files on your computer.

Solution 32: Boot Up To Ubuntu And Delete The File

The Ubuntu Live CD or any other Linux version can help you solve this issue. A simple Ubuntu distribution can be installed with the help of an ISO file that can be used to make a bootable drive. With this bootable drive, you can get a Ubuntu-powered device.

Once this is done, the user will have to find and delete the file that was causing problems. You can always revert back to the previous OS with another bootable drive.

Solution 33: Get Rid Of System Files' Metadata With Third-party Applications

Even the data that defines the system files on your computer can be responsible for this issue. The only choice we have is to get rid of this metadata with the help of third-party applications. When these metadata files are removed, you will be able to remove the file that couldn't be interacted with.

Solution 34: Transfer The Ownership To Another User

This error can arise because of Ownership of the file or folder. As a Windows user, you can change the ownership to a different user and this might be the solution to your action cannot be performed because the file is open in another program error.

1. Open the file's context menu and open the file **Properties**.
2. Go to the **Security** tab and select **Advanced**.
3. In the window that appears, click on the **Change** link, which is in the owner section.
4. Another window opens, where you have to type in the username in the text box and select the **Check names** option.
5. Then, click on the **Replace owner on subcontainers** and objects checkbox.
6. **Apply** these changes and click on the **OK** button to save your changes.

This solution will remove the barrier that is holding you from performing the action on your computer.

Solution 35: Copy A Different File

This is a simple workaround to check if the fault is with the file or the OS. You will have to try copying or doing the same you tried with the actual file, with another file. If you are able to interact with it as expected, the problem lies with the file. If you are not able to, the OS is at fault.

Solution 36: Disable The Read-only Attribute

When users try to make changes in a file that has a read-only attribute enabled, the system is a lot likely to display the action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program error. Read-only is a state of virtual elements when they can only be viewed and does not allow any changes to be made in them.

The following are the steps to fix change the file or folder attribute.

1. Right-click on the file that has been causing problems and open the **Properties**.
2. In the General tab, uncheck the Read-only checkbox in the Attributes section.
3. Then, **Apply** and **OK** these changes.

Once the file is no longer read-only, do as intended with the file and check if you can do it.

The above are all the techniques that can be used to fix the Windows Explorer – File is open in another program issue. We have curated a lot of solutions and we hope at least a few of them helped your case. If it did not, we recommend making a system backup and resetting the OS or going to a professional service center.

FAQs

How Do You Fix The Action Cannot Be Completed Because The File Is Open In Another Program?

To fix the Action cannot be completed because the file is open in another program issue, you can clean your disk up, clear the recycle bin, delete the temporary files, restart the windows explorer process, run folder windows as a separate process, kill the process with the process explorer, switch to a different folder view mode, turn off the windows search feature, close the windows explorer window, boot up the PC in safe mode, do a clean boot up of your pc and delete the thumbs.db file through command prompt.

How Do You Force Delete A File That Is Open In Another Program?

Deleting an open file by force is not a good idea as it can make you lose all the changes that were recently made. If you still wish to delete the file, you can use the Task Manager or the Process explorer. Keep in mind that this is not a good idea.